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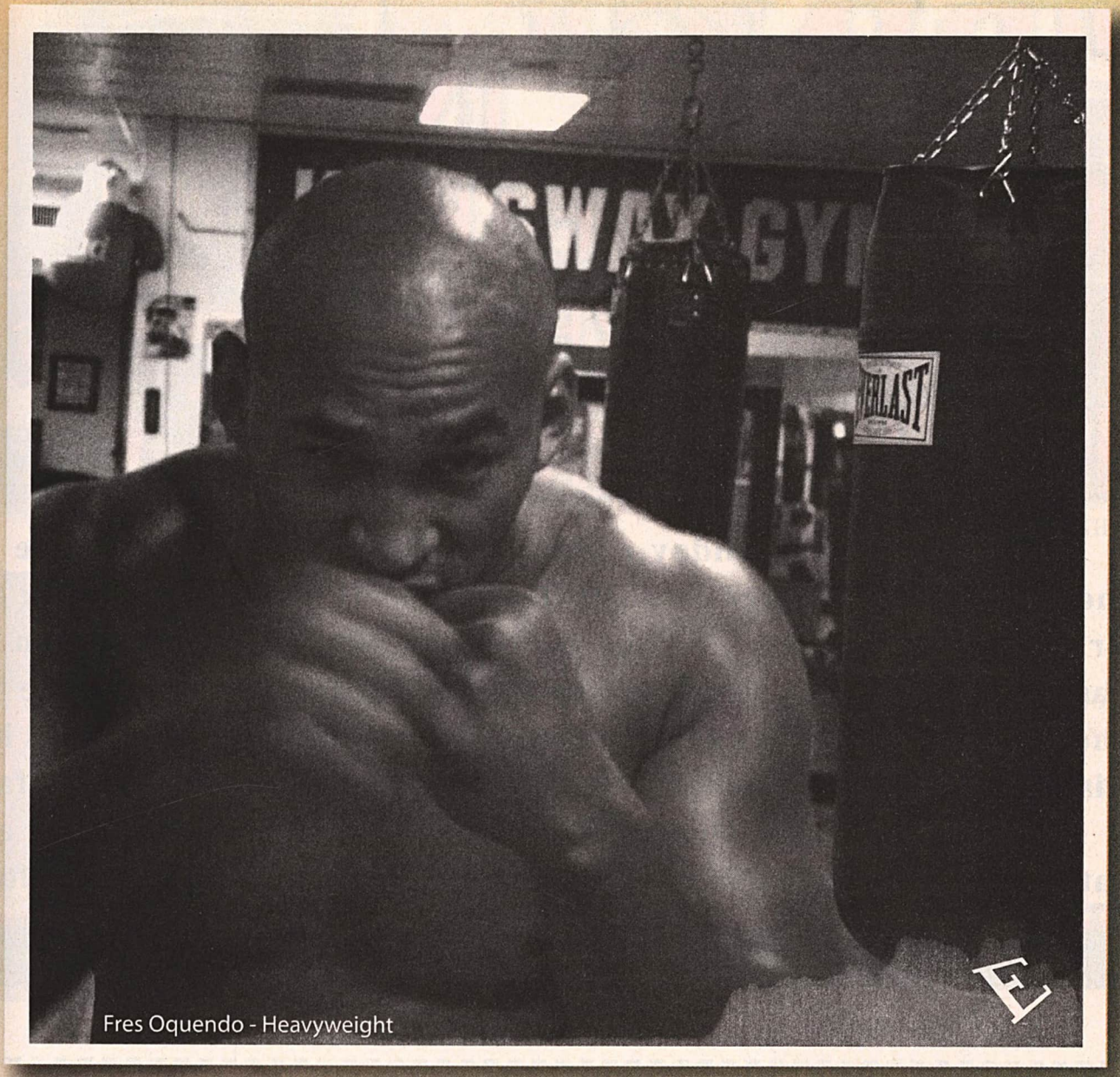

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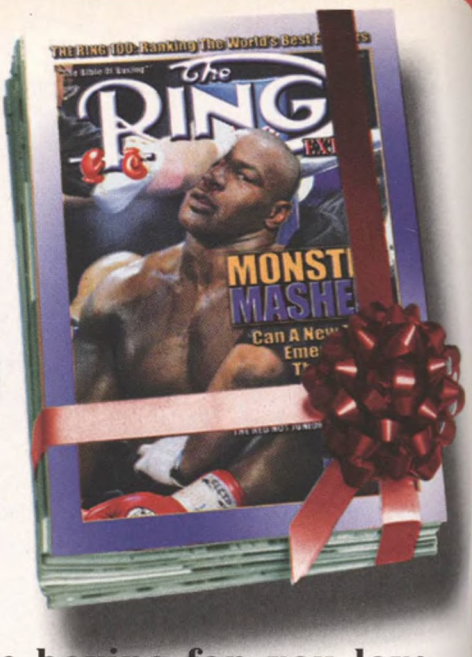

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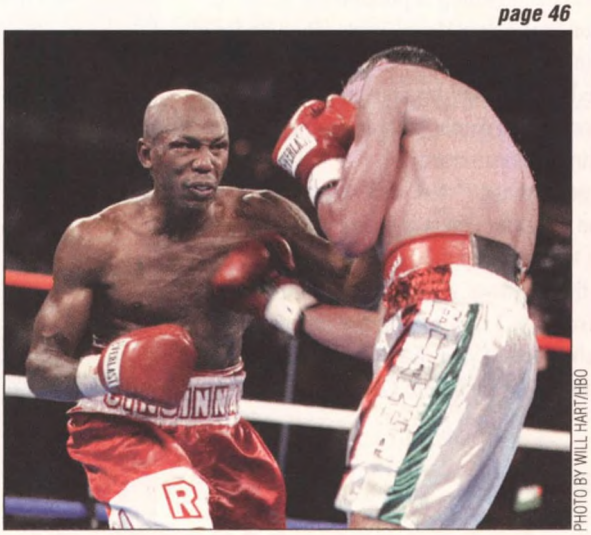

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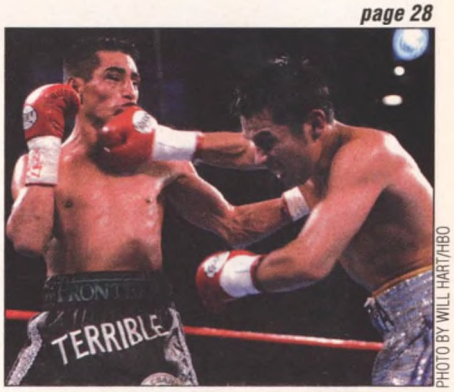

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RINGSIDE

Let's cut to the chase: A lot of folks believe that Mike Tyson entered the ring for the Lennox Lewis fight under the influence of antidepressant medication, and that the medication had a detrimental effect on his performance.

It's common knowledge that Tyson has taken this sort of medication in the past. In fact he once told a group of reporters that he took Zoloft to stop himself from killing them. He was joking, of course. I think.

Originally, Tyson was taken off medication before a fight, but prior to his bout with Andrew Golota in October 2002, it was revealed that he'd switched to a different medication, and no longer had to wean himself before a match.

It's easy to understand why people are suspicious. Tyson was heavily in debt going into the Lewis fight, and among his largest creditors was Showtime, which had advanced him millions of dollars since he was released from jail. The theory is that Tyson was kept on medication so that he wouldn't do anything crazy to jeopardize the fight. His mellow prefight behavior in Memphis only increased some people's doubts.

In an attempt to get to the bottom of the rumor, I contacted both the IBF and WBC to ask about the results of Tyson's postfight urinalysis. I was informed that the Tennessee boxing commission was in charge of drug testing, and that the two alphabet groups had not yet received the results. I then spoke with Marilyn Elam, communications director for the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance, the agency that regulates boxing in the state. Ms. Elam faxed me a copy of Tyson's test results.

According to the report, Tyson was clean. Next to each of the substances he was tested for was the word "negative." The problem is that none of substances was an antidepressant!

He was tested for illegal street drugs, performance enhancing drugs, and steroids. But not antidepressants.

I also spoke with Tyson's manager, Shelly Finkel, who said that Mike was taking "no medication." I have no reason to believe Finkel lied to me, but managers have been known to tell a fib or two in order to further their fighter's cause. So who knows?

I suspect that most of those who think Tyson was drugged are in denial. Their hero got whupped, and they just can't bring themselves to admit that Lewis did it fair and square. But this is boxing, after all, and damned near anything is possible.

We'll probably never know for sure if Tyson was on antidepressants when he fought Lewis, but I think the situation points to a glaring weakness in the current process.

"Generally speaking, drug testing is geared toward performance enhancing drugs," said Greg Sirb, executive director of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission and the former president of the Association of Boxing Commissioners.

But what about substances that diminish performance? Not only would they put a fighter at greater risk than normal, but anytime a fighter enters the ring under the influence of an antidepressant, he or she is cheating the paying public.

And let's not forget the winning boxer. In the minds of a significant number of people, Lewis' knockout of Tyson is tainted. Personally, I don't think the outcome would have been any different regardless of what substances Tyson had in his system. But if we're going to test fighters, antidepressants have to be included. Otherwise, we're only doing half the job.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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The RING

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August 1955: Rocky Marciano, Carmen Basilio, Carmelo Costa, Moore-Olson, Art Fletcher, columns by Nat Fleischer and Dan Daniel.

February 1961: Annual Issue—1960: Year in Review, 2,480 fighters rated, Year-end awards: Floyd Patterson (Fighter), Patterson-Johannson (Fight), Sugar Ray Robinson, Hank Casey, Paret-Thompson, '60s "oddities."

July 1962: Liston-Patterson preview by James Braddock, Tony Galento, Carlos Ortiz, Jofre-Marques, Harold Johnson, Emile Griffith.

September 1964: Patterson-Machen, Cleveland Williams, Laszlo Papp, Sonny Liston, Carlos Ortiz, three knockdown rule.

March 1967: Annual Issue—1966: Year in Review, Fighter of the Year award withheld from Muhammad Ali, Torres-Cotton (Fight of the Year), Ali-Terrell, Choinoi-McGowan, Curtis Cokes, Roger Rouse, Dick Tiger.

January 1968: Quarry-Patterson, Frazier-Doyle, Saldivar-Winstone, Garland "Rip" Randall, Emile Griffith, Georges Carpentier, all-time heavyweight tournament.

November 1968: Joey Archer, Sugar Ray Robinson, Jose Legra, Griffith-Harris, Fritzie Zivic, Lew Jenkins, overpaid fighters.

January 1972: Joe Frazier, Monzon-Griffith, Vicente Saldivar, Chris Dundee, Roberto Duran, Harry Greb, Rodolfo Martinez, Pinder-Vasquez.

May 1974: Muhammad Ali, Monzon-Napoles, Adolfo Viruet, Norton & Futch, Andries Steyn, Bobby Chacon.

August 1975: Ali-Lyle, Galindez-Elson, heavyweight contenders, Ken Norton, Eddie Gregory, Cooper-Love, Carlos Monzon.

October 1976: Joe Frazier, Archie Moore, Monzon-Valdes, Briscoe-Griffith, Gant-Gonzalez, Escalera-Yamabe, Cuevas-Espada, Ali-Inoki, Floyd Mayweather, Harry Gibbs, Ferdie Pacheco.

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ROUND ONE

FAREWELL TO FELIX?

Felix Trinidad's grand plan heading into his fight with Bernard Hopkins last September was to win and become the undisputed middleweight champion, move up in weight and fight Roy Jones, and then retire. As we all know, the plan didn't quite come to fruition. Trinidad lost to Hopkins, and next fought Hassine Cherifi, who isn't exactly Roy Jones. Nevertheless, if you take "Tito" at his word, the final step of the plan has been realized. Two months after the Cherifi fight, Trinidad shocked the boxing world by announcing his retirement from the sport at the age of 29.

Many boxing fans didn't want the news to be true because keeping Trinidad's name in the mix injects a great deal of intrigue and excitement into the middleweight/junior middle picture. But thinking of it from a less selfish perspective, retirement may well be the best thing for Trinidad. His spot in the Hall of Fame is assured, he should be financially secure for the rest of his life, and he has his health. If the Puerto Rican living legend never fights again, he will go down as one of the greatest success stories in the history of the game.

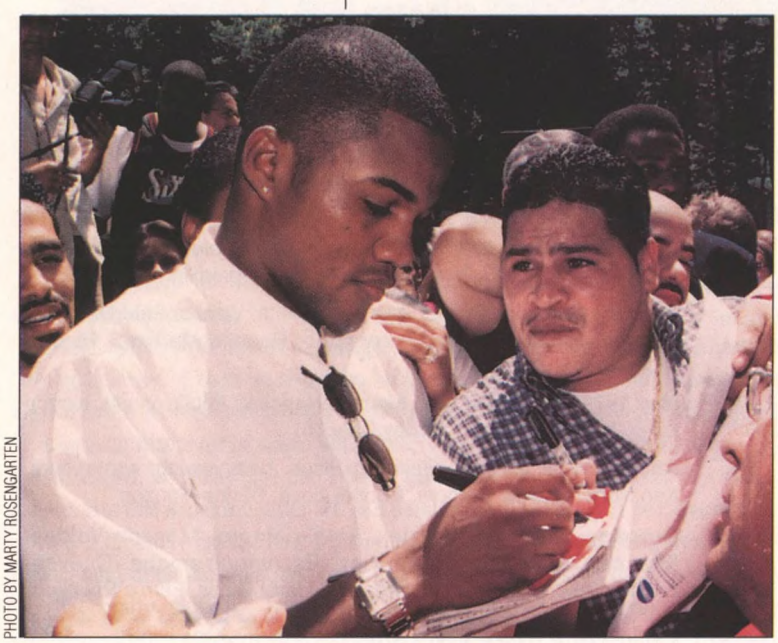


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Felix Trinidad, signing off

But that remains a major "if." Some think the retirement is just a negotiating ploy to get a rematch with Hopkins. Some think he's using the retirement to wriggle free from contractual obligations to Don King and/or HBO. Many think he's sincere about retiring, but will change his mind when the itch to throw punches becomes too intense to suppress.

In an official statement released on July 3, Trinidad said he was retiring because "no meaningful fights" were available. Rumors suggested, though, that Tito hung up the gloves because of concerns over persistent headaches, or because he had allegedly been knocked unconscious in a sparring session. Trinidad denied those reports when he met with the press on July 21 in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

"I am sound, I am healthy, I am retiring because it is time to retire," said Tito. "Hopefully, now I can take some time and dedicate myself to my family."

Trinidad's promoter, King, didn't make his millions by performing selfless acts, so it was no surprise that he called for Trinidad to re-think his decision.

"I feel that there's some unfinished business here," King said, "and Tito is a champion of the people, for the people, and by the people, so he would listen to his people's call."

Felix Trinidad Sr., Tito's father/manager/trainer, responded to King by insisting that the decision was final. At the same time, though, he said he would support his son if he chose to make a comeback. Nearly all of the greats have tried, with the likes of Gene Tunney, Rocky Marciano, and Marvin Hagler among the few who announced only one retirement. Perhaps Trinidad will join them. But as he's still in his prime, with numerous superfights available to him, the prevailing opinion is that Trinidad, so famous for climbing off the floor and coming back, isn't taking the full count just yet.

—Eric Raskin

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

A brawl broke out in the upper deck of the MGM Grand Garden seconds after the WBO super flyweight title bout between Fernando Montiel and Pedro "Rockero" Alcazar was terminated at the 1:16 mark of the sixth round. The scuffle in the stands seemed far more brutal than what had just taken place in the ring. When one of the fighting fans went down, three or four men gathered around, kicking and punching with impunity until security finally arrived and restored order.

Had you heard a few days later that the unfortunate fellow who got stomped had died, it wouldn't have come as a total shock. But waking up the Monday following the June 22 fight to discover that Alcazar had lapsed into a coma and died 36 hours after his bout with Montiel was hard to believe.

What made Alcazar's death so surprising was that it did not fit any of the profiles so frequently manifest in ring fatalities. Alcazar did not take a terrible beating. In fact, it appeared to be a bodyshot that took all the fight out of him in the sixth round, when he froze on the ropes and allowed Montiel to tee off with an unanswered volley that prompted referee Kenny Bayless to stop the fight.

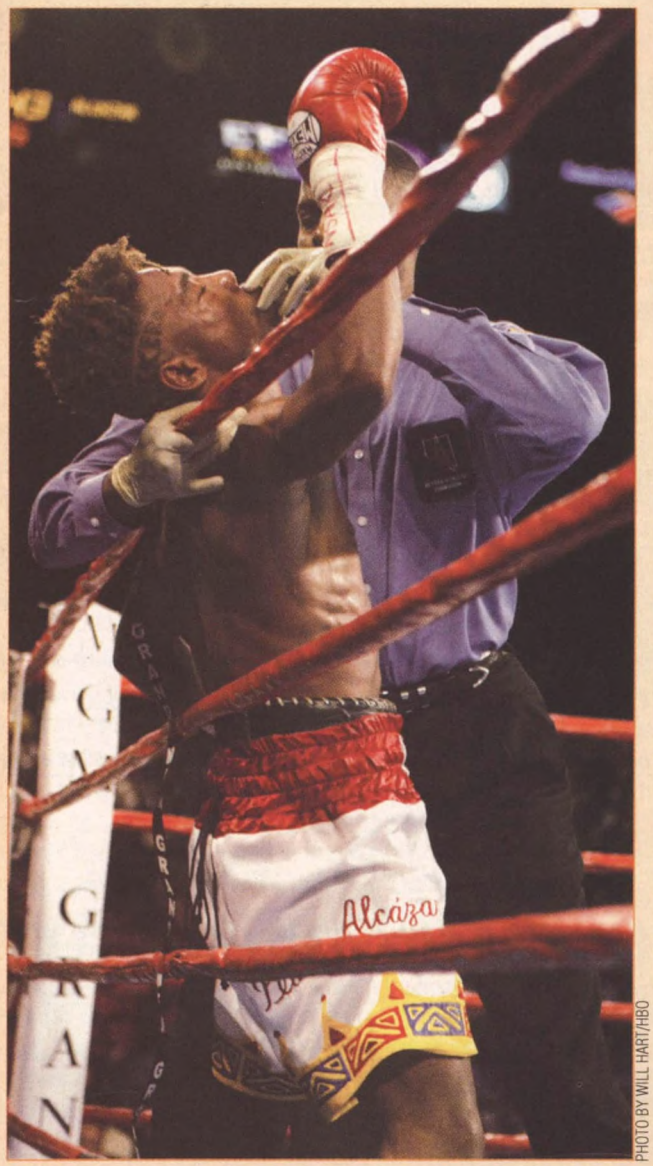


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Alcazar's final fight is stopped, and a bizarre tragedy would follow

"Most of the rounds were competitive," said Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission. "I thought the referee stopped it perfectly when he did."

The 26-year-old Panamanian was also not a used-up pug that shouldn't have been in the ring with Montiel in the first place. Alcazar entered the bout sporting a 25-0-2 (14) record. True, he'd been in an auto accident in February, but suffered only minor injuries to his back and left hand. An autopsy performed by the Clark County (Nevada) coroner's office listed the cause of death as "blunt force trauma to the head," but revealed no previous head injuries.

There were also concerns that cutting too much weight had damaged Alcazar; he weighed in at 115, but was up to 131 by fight time. The autopsy, however, discovered no signs of dehydration.

By far the most puzzling aspect of Alcazar's death was that he showed none of the postfight symptoms that normally alert doctors that a boxer has been seriously injured.

"The only complaints he had were related to his rib cage," said Dr. Margaret Goodman, a neurologist who examined Alcazar in the ring immediately after the fight and again in his dressing room later.

"He walked out of the ring on his own, and if there had been any question he was hurt, we would have ordered an MRI that night," said Ratner.

The next day, Alcazar, whose purse was $40,000, seemed in good spirits. He went sightseeing with members of his team, did some shopping, played the slot machines, ate in a fine restaurant, and rode the roller-coaster at the Stratosphere.

"Pedro was very happy. He seemed like a child in Disneyland," said Ludo Saenz, a friend of Alcazar's manger, Rogelio Espino, who acted as tour guide to Alcazar and his crew.

Alcazar complained of a headache late Sunday evening, took a Tylenol, and went to bed. A few hours later, he was found unconscious on the bathroom floor by his trainers, Mickey Lasso and Marcos Martinez, and declared brain dead upon arrival at the hospital.

"I've never seen anything like it," said longtime ringside physician Dr. Flip Homansky. "To my knowledge, there has never, ever, been something like this happen so long after a fight."

Said Goodman: "I'm baffled by it and it has me asking myself two questions: What can we do to prevent this from happening again; and if it could happen to [Alcazar], why doesn't it happen even more often?"

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
6-22-02	Fernando Montiel KO 6 Pedro Alcazar	PPV	jb	B+	A	B-
Overlooked in the wake of Alcazar's sad death is that Montiel looks like a young Johnny Tapia						
6-22-02	Miguel Cotto KO 5 Justin Juuko	PPV	jw	B-	C-	C
Juuko is so shot he makes Joseph Kiwanuka look like Jeff Lacy						
6-22-02	**Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Erik Morales**	**PPV**	**World f**	**A+**	**A+**	**B-**
Twenty-four rounds now and we still don't know who's better; let's do a steel-cage match already and get it over with						
6-27-02	Antwun Echols KO 1 Oscar Bravo	ESPN	sm	B	D+	B
Is it us or is Echols becoming one of the game's most dependable TV fighters?						
6-28-02	Teddy Reid KO 3 Germaine Sanders	ESPN2	w	C+	C+	D+
Teddy, Bummy Davis called; he wants his playbook back						
6-29-02	Wladimir Klitschko KO 6 Ray Mercer	HBO	h	A-	C+	C+
Hey, where are all those guys who said beforehand what a tough test Mercer would be?						
7-9-02	Alex Trujillo W 10 Juan Valenzuela	ESPN2	jw	B-	B+	B
Trujillo superb in win over tough-as-nails Valenzuela; he's ready right now for someone in top 10						
7-12-02	Miguel Figueroa W 10 Pito Cardona	ESPN2	w	C	C+	C+
Anyone else get the sense that on a good night Star Jones could outmaneuver Cardona?						
7-13-02	Zab Judah W 10 Omar Weis	Show	jw	A-	B+	C
Admit it: You were waiting for Judah to collapse every time a right cross came within six inches of his chin						
7-16-02	Vivian Harris W 12 Ubaldo Hernandez	ESPN2	jw	C+	C	C
You'd think that with a name like "Vivian," Harris would have a little more attitude in there						
7-19-02	Emanuel Augustus KO 8 Wilfredo Vilches	ESPN2	jw	C+	B+	B-
It is downright impossible not to root for Augustus against up-and-coming guys						
7-20-02	Antonio Tarver KO 5 Eric Harding	HBO	lh	A	A	B+
Ref to Harding: "Are you all right? Can you continue?" Harding: "Hey—I'm from Fillixshdelshia."						
7-20-02	**Vernon Forrest W 12 Shane Mosley**	**HBO**	**World w**	**A+**	**A**	**D**
Hey, the judges didn't give Mosley any credit for all that time he spent wiggling his fists around but not actually throwing punches						
7-21-02	Montell Griffin W 12 Derrick Harmon	FOXSN	lh	B	B	B-
The best we've seen Griffin look since the first Jones fight; where's he been all this time?						
7-23-02	Elvir Muriqi KO 3 Sammy Ahmad	ESPN2	lh	C-	B	A
An unforgettable six-knockdown war that wouldn't have lasted two minutes if Jay Nady was the ref						
7-23-02	Aaron Davis W 10 Ross Thompson	ESPN2	sm	C+	B+	C+
How is it possible that Davis is just 35 years old? Didn't he fight Meldrick Taylor during the Hoover administration?						
7-25-02	Robert Allen Tech. Win 6 Tito Mendoza	ESPN	m	B	B+	D-
Remember when Allen tried to DQ his way to a win over Bernard Hopkins? We're glad it didn't work for Mendoza, either						
7-26-02	DaVarryl Williamson KO 5 Corey Sanders	ESPN2	h	C+	B+	A-
We don't know how far Williamson will go, but it'll be fun watching him get there						
7-27-02	Larry Holmes W 10 Butterbean	PPV	h	F	C-	C-
Thanks, guys, for making us feel better about our beer guts and flaccid pecs						
7-27-02	Cliff Etienne D 10 Frans Botha	Show	h	B-	A	B
Only Jim Gray can make us sympathetic toward a ref—in this case Elmo Adolph—who completely blew a call						
7-27-02	**Tim Austin KO 10 Adan Vargas**	**HBO**	**IBF b**	**A**	**A-**	**A-**
This was superlative; is it possible that Austin is getting better?						
7-27-02	**John Ruiz W Disq. 10 Kirk Johnson**	**HBO**	**WBA h**	**A-**	**B+**	**D-**
How bad was this? Tim Witherspoon and Tony Tubbs are still laughing						
8-2-02	Charles Brewer KO 6 Scott Pemberton	ESPN2	sm	B+	C+	A
A wonderful slugfest, which means Brewer might not be a top-10 guy much longer						
8-3-02	Michael Grant KO 3 Robert Davis	ESPN	h	C+	B-	B-
At the end Grant got that look all Atlas fighters get; it says: "Okay, can we turn down the drama a little?"						
8-3-02	Antwun Echols KO 3 Richard Grant	Show	sm	B+	C-	B-
It should have occurred to Grant by now that the bright red hair kind of makes his head look like a bull's-eye						
8-3-02	**Acelino Freitas W 12 Daniel Attah**	**Show**	**WBA jl**	**A**	**B-**	**D+**
Anyone up for some foxy boxing featuring Mrs. Freitas against Paulie Ayala's wife?						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telem—Telemundo; Telef—Telefutura

DADDY'S LITTLE HELPER

You would expect a six-year-old to be well-versed in important kid things like the cast of characters on *Sesame Street*, the plot of a *Rug Rats* cartoon, or the latest cute Disney movie. But a six-year-old who can also talk about the differences between a left hook and an uppercut, a TKO and a knockout, a unanimous and split decision—and in two languages simultaneously?

That's Shanti Lerner, the daughter of THE RING's correspondent in the Philippines, Ted Lerner, who counts herself a fight fan and often acts as his interpreter when her dad works the fights as a ring announcer and television commentator or writes an article about a Filipino fighter.

One of the nice things about having a daughter grow up in a foreign country is that she learns two cultures and two languages all at once. In the Philippines, English is widely spoken, but Filipino is the national language and the language of the heart of the people. But because English is so prevalent, many people, including Shanti, speak the two languages interchangeably and effortlessly, often times switching from one to the other and back in the same sentence.

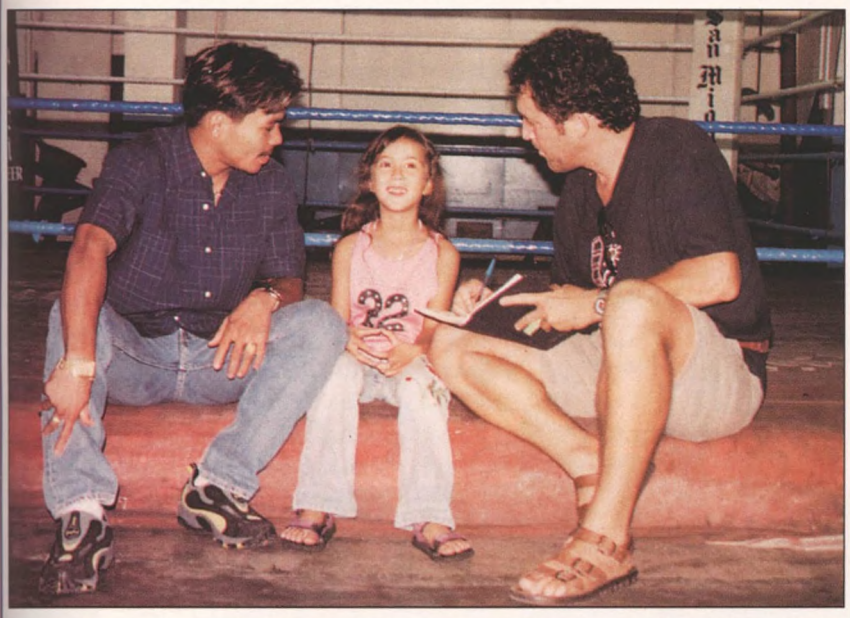
With English so widely spoken, though, Lerner has been admittedly lazy in learning fluent Filipino. Many Filipino boxers, coming from poor backgrounds, speak limited English. And so when he's at the fights trying to glean some facts from a fighter, Shanti, who probably prefers running wild around the arena with other kids, gets called into action.

"What did he say? Ask him where he trains? What's his best punch?" Shanti rarely fails to come through with the finely nuanced interpretation.

That she knows her boxing shouldn't be surprising, as the sport has been in Shanti's blood since she was born. Lerner's Filipina wife has always brought her to the fights whenever Ted worked. Chalk it up also to the fact that at home, Daddy hogs the television whenever boxing is on, which is several times a week in the Philippines. Forced to watch the Sweet Science over Nick Jr., she's taken to the sport effortlessly.

Of course, like all kids, Shanti asks questions you just can't seem to answer. "One time," Lerner recalled, "when I didn't like the way a boxer had lost and I yelled something at the screen, she remarked, 'Daddy what's that mean when you say, "He took a dive"'?"

"That means he stinks," Lerner said, rather than trying to explain the sometimes shifty world of boxing. She is after all, only six years old.



Shanti Lerner bridges the language gap between her father, Ted, and Manny Pacquiao

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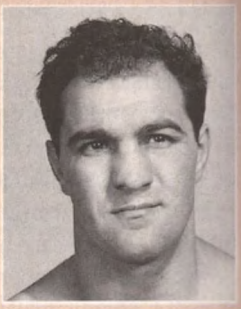
OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Corley: Trading swipes with Joppy

Former bantamweight titlist **Wayne McCullough** was relicensed to box in Britain in late-June, after being denied a license for nearly two years due to a cyst on his brain. He had been relicensed in America months earlier when doctors determined the cyst not to be dangerous. After the British Boxing Board of Control finally cleared McCullough, four of its doctors resigned in protest ... A feud has developed between D.C.-area fighters **DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley** and **William Joppy**, involving insults, punches, and lawsuits. In the September issue of THE RING sister mag *Boxing 2002*, Corley accused Joppy of having "bad habits," prompting the middleweight to approach Chop Chop at the gym and smack him in the face. Junior welter Corley, who admitted he returned fire, is suing Joppy over the incident ... Former heavyweight champion **Riddick Bowe** filed a $55-million suit against his former manager, **Rock Newman**, in early-July, alleging that Newman took advantage of him during his career and received a larger percentage of Bowe's purses than he was entitled to ... More bad news for Newman: Heavyweight **Lance Whitaker** left him in mid-July, dropped the "GOOFi" monicker that he and Newman conceived, and went back to trainer **Joe Goossen** ... In early-July, a New York judge awarded **Lennox Lewis** $7.3-million in damages against his former promoter, Panix Promotions. The judge also awarded Lewis' current promoter, Main Events, $681,000. The rulings were based on a jury's determination that Panix committed fraud and breached its duty to Lewis ... What's up with fighters retiring at the age of 29 shortly after losing their titles? Four months after dropping his WBA super flyweight belt to **Alexander Munoz**, Japan's **Celes Kobayashi**, 29, announced his retirement in mid-July. Kobayashi said he intends to open up a gym ... Former New York Police Commissioner **Bernie Kerik** became the new chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission in late-June, replacing **Ray Kelly** ... Italian boxing brothers **Silvio** and **Gianluca Branco** were arrested in early-July and accused of being members of a criminal organization involved in extortion. Gianluca, a junior welterweight, was rated number one by the WBC, but his anticipated shot at **Kostya Tszyu** is now in jeopardy ... The bobble-head craze has spread to boxing, as July 20 was **Rocky Marciano** bobble-head night for the Brockton Rox minor league baseball team. The Rox drew a sellout crowd of 4,843, and retired the number 49 (the unbeaten Marciano's career win total) in the fighter's honor ... Former WBA flyweight titlist **Jose Bonilla** died in mid-June in his native Venezuela due to complications from asthma. Bonilla held the title from November '96 to May '98 and compiled a career record of 27-5-1 (14). He was 34 years old ... **Hugo Benjamin Guzman**, an Argentinean junior lightweight, died in early-July due to injuries suffered in a fight a week earlier. Guzman, 29, was knocked through the ropes by opponent **Cesar Romero** and landed hard on the floor outside the ring. He fell into a coma moments later and never came to ... **Mark Kram Sr.**, a former *Sports Illustrated* boxing writer, died in mid-June of an apparent heart attack. Kram, 69, had most recently garnered attention with his controversial 2001 book about the **Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier** feud, *Ghosts Of Manila* ... Highly regarded sports artist **Gabe Perillo**, who painted more than 15 covers for THE RING from 1969-'79, died recently of congestive heart failure at the age of 76. In addition to being an artist, Perillo was also a fighter, winning a Golden Gloves title when serving in the Navy.



Marciano: One tough bobble-head

THE PUNCHLINES

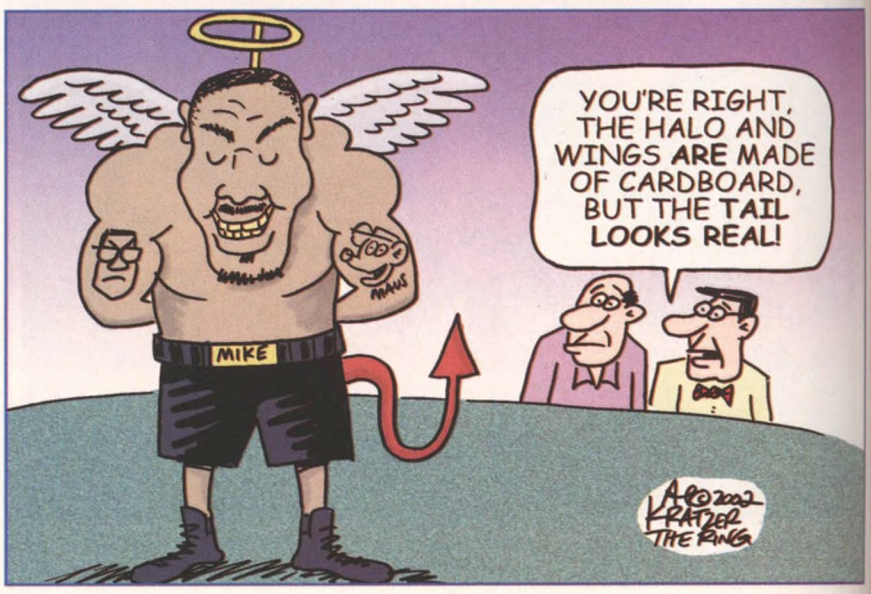
"Don King will probably want Zab's son."

—Main Events matchmaker Carl Moretti, on what it would take to make a fight between Judah and DeMarcus Corley

"He sucks, but that's his job, to be a f___ing a__hole, you know, that's Larry Merchant."

—Norman Stone, co-manager of John Ruiz, about whom he felt Merchant had been overly critical

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended August 11, 2002)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
2. ROY JONES
   Light Heavyweight
3. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Featherweight
4. VERNON FORREST
   Welterweight
5. KOSTYA TSZYU
   Junior Welterweight
6. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Lightweight
7. LENNOX LEWIS
   Heavyweight
8. ERIK MORALES
   Featherweight
9. SHANE MOSLEY
   Welterweight
10. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
    Junior Middleweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: John Ruiz advances from fifth to fourth following his DQ win over Kirk Johnson, who falls from fourth to eighth. Jameel McCline (sixth last issue), David Tua (seventh last issue), and Hasim Rahman (eighth last issue) jump one spot each as a result of Johnson's demotion.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Dale Brown (10th last issue) exits after being stopped by third-ranked Jean-Marc Mormeck. This makes room for Vincenzo Cantatore to debut at number 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Antonio Tarver (formerly third) leaps into the number-one spot by virtue of his kayo of Eric Harding, who slips from second to third. Tarver's impressive victory also knocks Dariusz Michalczewski down a peg, from first to second. This demotion was based as much on the poor caliber of opposition Michalczewski has been fighting of late as it was on Tarver's big win. The shakeup continues with Montell Griffin (fifth last issue) moving up to fourth on the strength of his decision over Derrick Harmon, which bumps Reggie Johnson (fourth last issue) down to fifth. Bruno Girard moves from eighth to sixth following his win over Lou Del Valle, passing Julio Gonzalez (seventh last issue) and David Telesco (sixth last issue).

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Antwun Echols (fourth last issue) trades places with Byron Mitchell (third last issue). Echols tallied quick stoppages of Richard Grant and Oscar Bravo, while Mitchell had a life-and-death struggle with unranked Julio Cesar Green.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: The vacancy at the number-one spot, created by Felix Trinidad's retirement, is filled by Harry Simon (second last issue). Also departing the 160-pound ranks is Rhoshii Wells (10th last issue), who will be campaigning as a junior middle. Rodney Jones and Erland Betare fill the two empty slots at ninth and 10th, respectively. Also, Robert Allen moves from eighth to sixth following his win over Tito Mendoza, who remains at number seven.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Steve Roberts (ninth last issue) and Roman Karmazin (10th last issue) both depart following losses. Verno Phillips and Wells are aboard at number nine and 10, respectively.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Juan Lazcano (sixth last issue) trades places with Angel Manfredy (fifth last issue) due to superior recent form.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Veteran John Brown (eighth last issue) hasn't won a major contest in some time and therefore departs. Brown's place is taken by Cassius Baloyi, who has moved up from featherweight. Jorge Barrios slips from ninth to 10th, following a draw with Ricardo Silva. Daniel Attah improves from 10th to ninth, even though he lost a wide decision to top-ranked Acelino Freitas.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: THE RING now recognizes Marco Antonio Barrera as world champion, thanks to his decision win over Erik Morales, who advances from two to one on the strength of his close loss to Barrera. Lehlo Ledwaba, now fighting at 126, is aboard at number nine.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: With Ledwaba (fifth last issue) now fighting at 126, everybody ranked below last issue moves up one place, and the vacancy at number 10 is filled by Jose Luis Valbuena.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes,

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Celes Kobayashi (sixth last issue) has retired. A second vacancy was created by the tragic death of Pedro Alczar (seventh last issue). Fernando Montiel (who was formerly rated at flyweight) and Luis Bolano are the replacements, at third and 10th, respectively.

FLYWEIGHTS: Montiel (fifth last issue) is now a 115-pounder, which advances everybody ranked below him last issue one spot each and makes room for Damaen Kelly at number 10. Previously unranked Omar Narvaez debuts at number nine following his win over Adonis Rivas (ninth last issue). Rivas departs.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Jorge Arce (seventh last issue) switches spots with Yosam Choi (third last issue) after stopping the South Korean to win an alphabet belt. Also trading places are Zolani Petelo (ninth last issue) and Melchor Cob Castro (previously number 10), due to Cob Castro's greater activity.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Two alphabet titles changed hands at 105 pounds: Miguel Barrera (ninth last issue) zooms to second, following his decision over Roberto Leyva, who slides from second to third. Noel Arambulet stays at number five, while his decision victim, Keitaro Hoshino, falls from fourth to sixth.

POUND-FOR-POUND: The retirement of Trinidad (fifth last issue) prompts a P-4-P overhaul that sees Kostya Tszyu advance from eighth to fifth and Lennox Lewis jump from 10th to seventh. Erik Morales' strong showing against Marco Antonio Barrera (currently third) allows "El Terrible" to return at number eight. Shane Mosley's second loss to Vernon Forrest (currently number four) drops "Sugar Shane" from sixth to ninth. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended August 11, 2002

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Fernando Montiel moved up to junior bantam and claimed the number-three spot

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 40-2-1 (31)

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 39-1 (36)
2. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 35-2 (20)
3. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Fairburn, GA 38-5-2 (25)
4. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 38-4-1 (27)
5. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Port Jefferson, NY 28-2-3 (16)
6. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 40-3 (35)
7. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-4 (29)
8. **KIRK JOHNSON**
Canada 32-1-1 (23)
9. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 49-4 (43)
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 31-1 (30)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Whittier, CA 34-2 (27)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-1 (20)
3. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 43-3 (25)
4. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 54-5 (36)
5. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-3 (29)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 25-2-1 (20)
7. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 16-1-1 (11)
8. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 20-3-2 (12)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 33-8-1 (18)
10. **RHOSHII WELLS**
Atlanta, GA 15-0-2 (8)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
Mexico 55-3 (39)

1. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 41-1 (31)
2. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 36-1 (31)
3. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-12 (27)
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 52-2-2 (28)
5. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 39-2 (31)
6. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 38-5 (24)
7. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 42-6-1 (17)
8. **JULIO PABLO CHACON**
Argentina 43-2 (31)
9. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 33-2-1 (22)
10. **DANIEL SEDA**
Puerto Rico 18-0 (15)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 34-1 (12)

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 34-2-1 (25)
2. **BONES ADAMS**
Henderson, KY 41-5-3 (19)
3. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 44-3-1 (31)
4. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 28-0-1 (12)
5. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 26-1-2 (15)
6. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 28-1-1 (13)
7. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
Mexico 30-2-2 (21)
8. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 32-3 (24)
9. **AGAPITO SANCHEZ**
Dominican Republic 33-7-2 (19)
10. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 21-2-1 (12)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 25-0-1 (22)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 37-1-1 (26)
3. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 52-2 (26)
4. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 28-3 (26)
5. **EIDY MOYA**
Venezuela 15-2 (8)
6. **ADAN VARGAS**
Mexico 37-4-1 (23)
7. **HERIBERTO RUIZ**
Mexico 25-1-2 (12)
8. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 27-3 (16)
9. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 22-3-2 (13)
10. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 21-11-1 (17)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 31-0 (27)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 42-12-1 (28)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 28-2 (20)
4. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 17-0 (14)
5. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 24-5 (22)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 18-1-1 (17)
7. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 46-4 (22)
8. **ALEXANDRE GUROV**
   Ukraine 32-3-1 (27)
9. **JORGE CASTRO**
   Argentina 119-8-3 (83)
10. **VINCENZO CANTATORE**
    Italy 27-2 (26)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 46-1 (37)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 20-1 (17)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 46-0 (36)
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA 21-2-1 (7)
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 43-3 (29)
5. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 42-7-1 (24)
6. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France 42-2-2 (7)
7. **DAVID TELESCO**
   Port Chester, NY 26-3 (21)
8. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 30-1 (20)
9. **LOU DEL VALLE**
   Bronx, NY 31-3-1 (21)
10. **CLINTON WOODS**
    England 32-1 (19)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 33-0 (27)
2. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 27-0 (5)
3. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 29-4-1 (26)
4. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 25-1-1 (18)
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 38-9 (27)
6. **ERIC LUCAS**
   Canada 35-4-3 (13)
7. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX 41-7 (28)
8. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 40-1 (34)
9. **MANUEL SIACA**
   Puerto Rico 16-4 (15)
10. **MARKUS BEYER**
    Germany 25-1 (10)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 41-2-1 (30)

1. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia 23-0 (17)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 33-2-1 (24)
3. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 32-1 (29)
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden 26-1 (19)
5. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
   Italy 21-0 (7)
6. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 33-4 (24)
7. **TITO MENDOZA**
   Panama 27-4 (20)
8. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 32-6-1 (20)
9. **RODNEY JONES**
   Lafayette, LA 26-3 (16)
10. **ERLAND BETARE**
    France 35-7-2 (16)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: VERNON FORREST
Atlanta, GA 35-0 (26)

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 38-2 (35)
2. **RICARDO MAYORGA**
   Nicaragua 24-3-1 (22)
3. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 26-3 (18)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 30-0 (24)
5. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana 21-1-1 (19)
6. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 37-4 (26)
7. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 21-10 (16)
8. **CORY SPINKS**
   St. Louis, MO 29-2 (11)
9. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 37-1 (23)
10. **DANNY PEREZ**
    El Cajon, CA 27-2 (17)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 29-1-1 (23)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 49-3 (29)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 28-1 (21)
3. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 27-1-1 (16)
4. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 38-11 (27)
5. **DIOBELYS HURTADO**
   Miami, FL 35-2-1 (23)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 34-6 (28)
7. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 43-5-2 (17)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 30-1 (10)
9. **BEN TACKIE**
   Ghana 24-3 (15)
10. **OMAR WEIS**
    Argentina 35-4-3 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 28-0 (20)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 46-5-1 (42)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 34-2-1 (16)
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 35-0 (14)
4. **LEONARD DORIN**
   Canada 21-0 (7)
5. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 30-2-1 (23)
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 40-6-1 (29)
7. **RAUL BALBI**
   France 48-6-1 (33)
8. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 34-0 (22)
9. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico 48-5-1 (33)
10. **COLIN DUNNE**
    England 37-1 (26)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 32-0 (29)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 27-1 (17)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 37-2 (26)
4. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 20-1 (5)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 36-2-1 (33)
6. **PHILLIP NDOU**
   South Africa 27-1 (26)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 37-3-1 (23)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 27-1 (15)
9. **DANIEL ATTAH**
   Nigeria 20-1-1 (8)
10. **JORGE BARRIOS**
    Argentina 33-1-1 (24)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 26-2-1 (7)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 23-0 (23)
3. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 24-0-1 (18)
4. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-3-1 (11)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 45-4-2 (30)
6. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 21-1 (13)
7. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 35-9-3 (19)
8. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 28-3-1 (18)
9. **IN JOO CHO**
   Korea 18-2 (7)
10. **LUIS BOLANO**
    Colombia 36-0 (28)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 44-2 (25)
2. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 31-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 26-0 (20)
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 20-1 (13)
5. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 42-1 (14)
6. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 12-1-2 (8)
7. **PETER CULSHAW**
   England 21-1-1 (12)
8. **GERSON GUERRERO**
   Mexico 24-4 (18)
9. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 11-0-1 (7)
10. **DAMAEN KELLY**
    Ireland 17-1 (8)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 50-0-1 (37)
2. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 31-2-1 (20)
3. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 30-3-1 (22)
4. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 28-1 (23)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 25-2 (12)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 19-2-1 (11)
7. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 24-2 (13)
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan 24-1 (12)
9. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico 66-8-4 (30)
10. **ZOLANI PETELO**
    South Africa 17-3-2 (9)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 27-1-1 (17)
2. **MIGUEL BARRERA**
   Colombia 19-0-2 (11)
3. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 21-1-1 (18)
4. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 47-2-2 (17)
5. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 18-2-1 (10)
6. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 22-8 (5)
7. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines 31-7-2 (22)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 33-2 (20)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 27-1 (21)
10. **KHULILE MAKEBA**
    South Africa 16-1 (9)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

HEY JUDAH

So now the Zab Judah resurrection is underway, and if it turns out to be half as overblown a his alphabet title reign and the road to his first superfight were, please, editors, spare me the chance to be a part of it. Show me some mercy by instead assigning me to interview Samransak Singmanassak without a translator, or review a three-hour instructional video of Chris Byrd teaching the head feint, or cover George Foreman's next colonoscopy. Anything but Judah II. To tell you the truth, saying this columnist isn't too fond of young Zabdiel is like saying Eminem doesn't wait with breathless anticipation every year for the arrival of Mother's Day.

A 10-round unanimous decision over Omar Weis in July was Judah's first step toward trying to convince us that while his two-round loss to Kostya Tszyu last November may have resulted in him acting like a postfight punk, it didn't send him into a permanent funk or turn his career into junk. Even months before targeting Weis, Judah was vowing that he'd still live up to the promise that had led Lou Duva, the former trainer of four-division titlist Pernell Whitaker, to compare the southpaw Judah to the great "Sweet Pea."

In Weis, Judah was facing someone who had hung the first career "L" around the neck of Hector Camacho Jr. and even managed to make the cut of "THE RING 100," this magazine's ranking of the best fighters in the world. (Much like the backup punter who's called into the coach's office on the

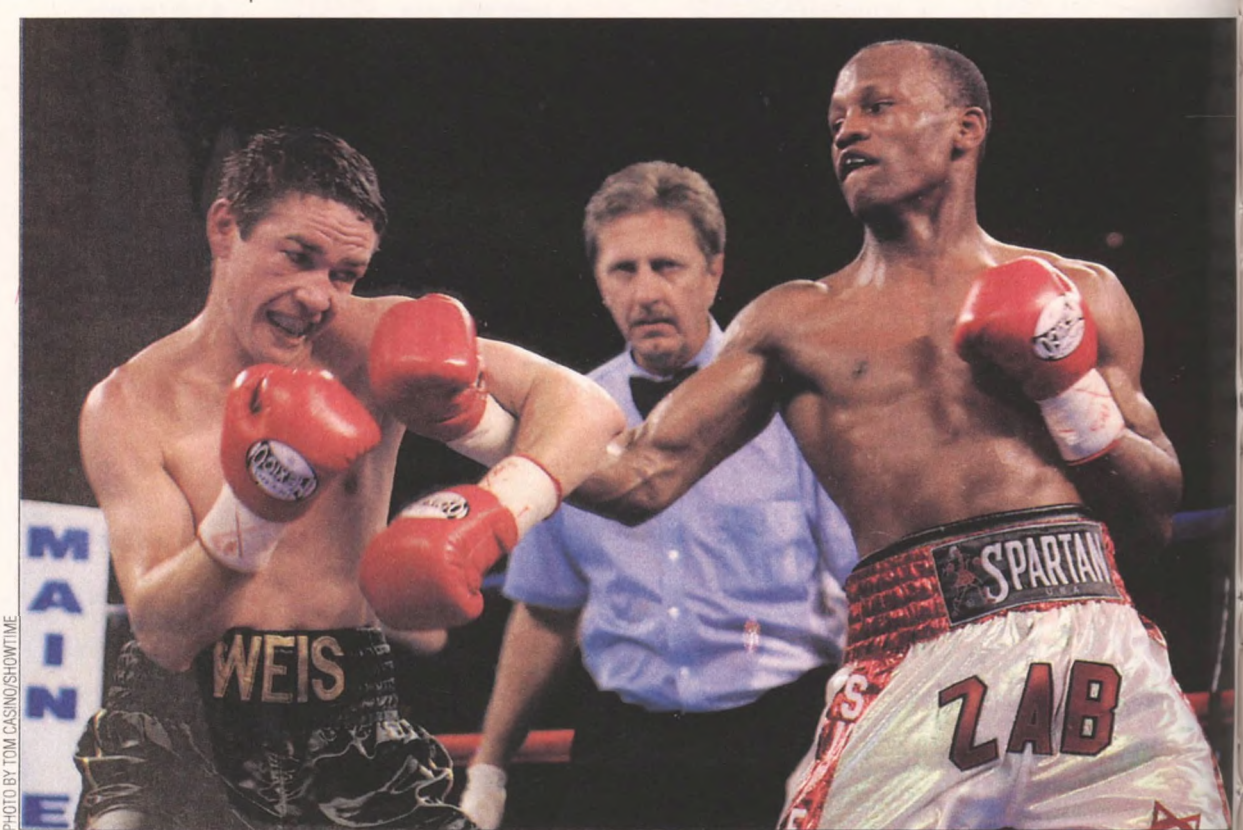


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Judah got back on the winning track against Weis

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

This scene had Ryan smiling wide

last day of training camp and given the unexpected good news, Weis squeaked in at number 100.) Judah fought an overly cautious and boring fight and did too much smiling when he got hit, but he decked the Argentine in round two, walked away with the victory, and restored a little of his lost luster.

The natural inclination is to root for a kid in Judah's situation. Comebacks, after all, are great human interest stories and they lead to intriguing matchups. My problem, though, is that Judah did so much to turn me off between the time he first gained notice as a rising star and the time he finally returned to his dressing room after the Tszyu debacle, that it's impossible for me to want to see him back on top. The more success he has, the bigger the forum for his boorishness. The greater the number of microphones around him and his handlers, the more ramblings we'll hear from his father, Yoel, a man who can make Richard Williams, the eternally obnoxious father of Venus and Serena, seem likable.

What is it about Judah that irks me so much? Uh, how many pages do we have? Certainly not the 11 that *Sports Illustrated* devoted to Zab and Daddy last fall for a profile piece that blew so much smoke up their asses, you'd have thought their underwear had caught fire. That's right, 11 pages. Gee, do you think the *SI* editors thought Tszyu had a chance? Did they even know that Tszyu had two arms?) That was followed by Judah's prediction that the Tszyu fight would he his easiest, and his lament that the bout wasn't winner-take-all.

Lucky for Judah it wasn't winner-take-all, or he might have been forced to hitchhike home from Las Vegas. On his biggest night, when the 3-1 favorite was supposed to look like Muhammad Ali against Sonny Liston, he instead resembled Trevor Berbick against Mike Tyson, suffering multiple knockdowns from a single punch. (Warning to Tszyu foes: Drop your hands and it'll Kostya.) Angered by what he considered to be a premature stoppage, Judah then had a temper tantrum, thrusting his fist into referee Jay Nady's neck and hurling a ring stool. What a surprise it must have been for some fans to learn that Judah is pals with that other sultan of self-control, the aforementioned Mr. Tyson.

Which brings us to that whole Brooklyn thing. With all due respect to New York City's most populated borough, one that boasts the most beautiful Italian girls, strongest Russian vodka, and tastiest West Indian food you'd ever hope to find, some of us are just plain Brooklyned-out when it comes to the fight game. In the world of boxing, Brooklyn has become a synonym not just for toughness and drive, but also for thuggery and bad attitude. Tyson was more than enough of *that* side of Brooklyn to have to stomach, but then we also had the, *ahem*, pleasure of sitting through Riddick Bowe's act. Judah came next. Don't any of these guys realize that Floyd Patterson hailed from the same battle-scarred neighborhood but never felt compelled to act like a goon?

The press box has a certain code of behavior. Those of us employed as journalists aren't supposed to root. But nobody told us that we couldn't smile. A lot of times, after watching some fighter's ego run wild, or listening to his cocky quotes, or experiencing the condescending attitude of his manager and promoter, or reading the press releases and shameless cheerleading for him that's disguised as newspaper and magazine articles, we wake up one day to see the big shot take an unexpected fall. And our smiles are so wide, you'd have to change trains to get from one end of them to the other.

Like, for instance, when Buster Douglas sent Tyson crawling around in search of his mouthpiece at the Tokyo Dome. Or when James Toney removed Michael Nunn's smirk with a barrage of bombs. Or when Marlon Starling exposed Mark Breland. Or when Marco Antonio Barrera yanked the magic carpet out from under Prince Naseem Hamed.

Believe me, after Tszyu walloped Judah with a right hand and the New Yorker got up from the canvas only to crash right down again in a daze, you couldn't have removed the smile from *my* mug with a jackhammer or a stick of dynamite.

Judah's shaky chin (he was floored by Jan Bergman and Terronn Millett before Tszyu got to him) is probably going to prevent him from ever reaching the pound-for-pound top 10 or collecting championships the way a Whitaker once did. But because he's only 24 years old, he possesses outstanding hand speed and good power, and will probably be moved more carefully from now on, Judah will likely win another alphabet crown of some sort, regain some status with the boxing press, and force all of us to pay him some attention again. The win over Weis was Step One. Before long, Zab and Daddy will probably be serving notice that, once again, Brooklyn's in the house.

When that day comes, hide the ring stools and remind the referee to protect himself at all times. ■

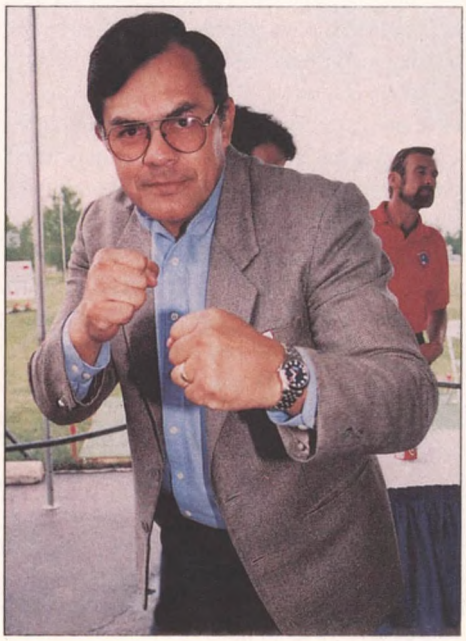
CAMERA CLICKS

International Boxing Hall of Fame Induction Weekend

PHOTOS BY MIKE GREENHILL

We often ask if a fighter has what it takes to get up off the floor, but it's also important that he has what it takes to get down on the floor. Hall of Famer and three-division ex-champ Alexis Arguello and former heavyweight beltholder Ernie Terrell showed they still have some moves as they cut a rug with a swarm of fans at Graziano's, a popular bar/restaurant in Canastota.

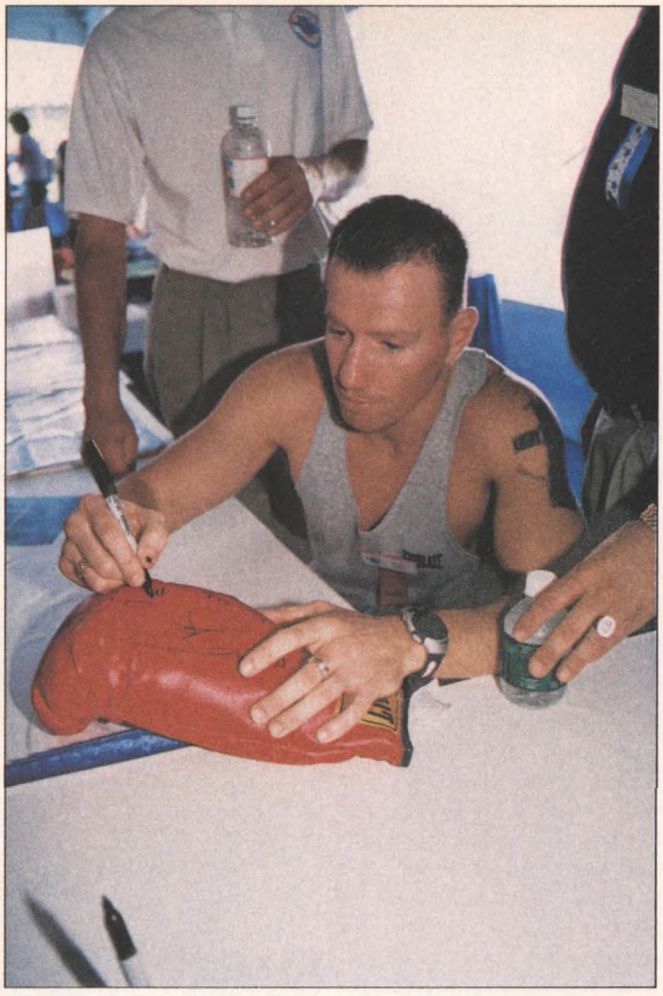
The brittle-handed Jeff Fenech probably doesn't like using the words "fist" and "cast" in the same sentence, but he swallowed his pride and made a fist cast at his Hall of Fame induction. The Australian great was elected in his first year of eligibility, the first fighter to be so honored since Matthew Saad Muhammad in 1998.



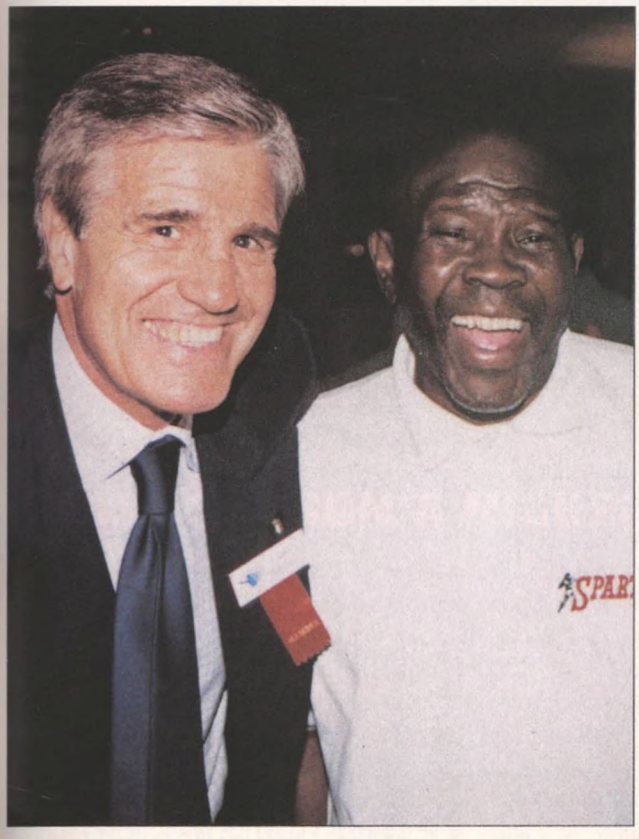
Though he now bears a strong resemblance to mild-mannered Clark Kent, Pipino Cuevas looked an awful lot like Superman during his explosive reign as WBA welterweight king from 1976-'80. The hard-hooking Cuevas, now 44, made the trip to Canastota from Mexico to be part of the induction class of 2002.

Here's something you don't see often anymore: Jesse James Leija in the ring without blood streaming down his face. The veteran former 130-pound titleholder entertained fans in Canastota by pounding the pads—and luckily for everyone, the pads didn't turn and quit when Leija started getting the better of them.

Boxing's a tough business, but it certainly has its benefits. Here's an attractive trio of fighters' wives—Amy Norris (married to Terry), Leti Ayala (married to Paulie), and Suzee Fenech (married to Jeff)—who prove that soaking up punishment does not necessarily go unrewarded.

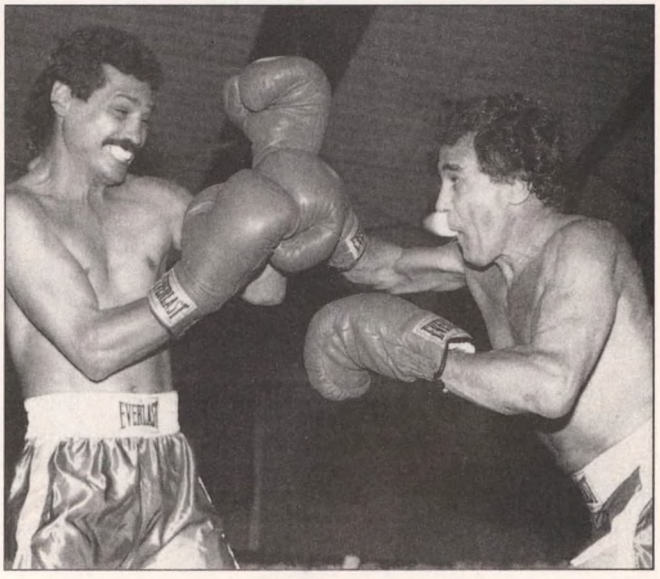


Junior welterweight contender Micky Ward was on hand for Hall of Fame weekend, gladly taking time to sign autographs for fans. Even if the popular New Englander wore a glove this big, we bet "Irish Micky" could still do some damage with his left to the body.



Nino Benvenuti and Emile Griffith battled for 45 rounds over the course of their three-fight series in the late-'60s, but there would be no fourth fight when they met up in Canastota in June—just a few shared smiles and laughs. By the way, can you believe Benvenuti is 64 years old? This guy makes Dick Clark look like Keith Richards.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



Arguello doesn't spend all of his time in Canastota dancing. In 1992, the Nicaraguan great squared off with legendary Brazilian champion Eder Jofre, and by the look of things, he had a pretty good time doing it.

NEW FACES

CLARENCE VINSON

Bantamweight

PRO RECORD

2001		
Jan. 27	Adrian Valdez, New York City	W 4
April 7	Bryan Garcia, Las Vegas	W 4
June 29	Luis Claudio, Washington, D.C.	KO 2
Aug. 11	Oscar Martinez, Little Rock, AR	KO 2
Nov. 23	Jhovany Collado, New York City	W 6
2002		
March 9	Shane Langford, New York City	KO 2
March 21	Sandro Oviedo, Glen Burnie, MD	KO 5
June 20	Jason Adams, Glen Burnie	W 8
July 5	Sheldon Wile, Keshena, WI	KO 3
July 20	Jose Beltran, Indianapolis, IN	W 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
10	10	0	0	5

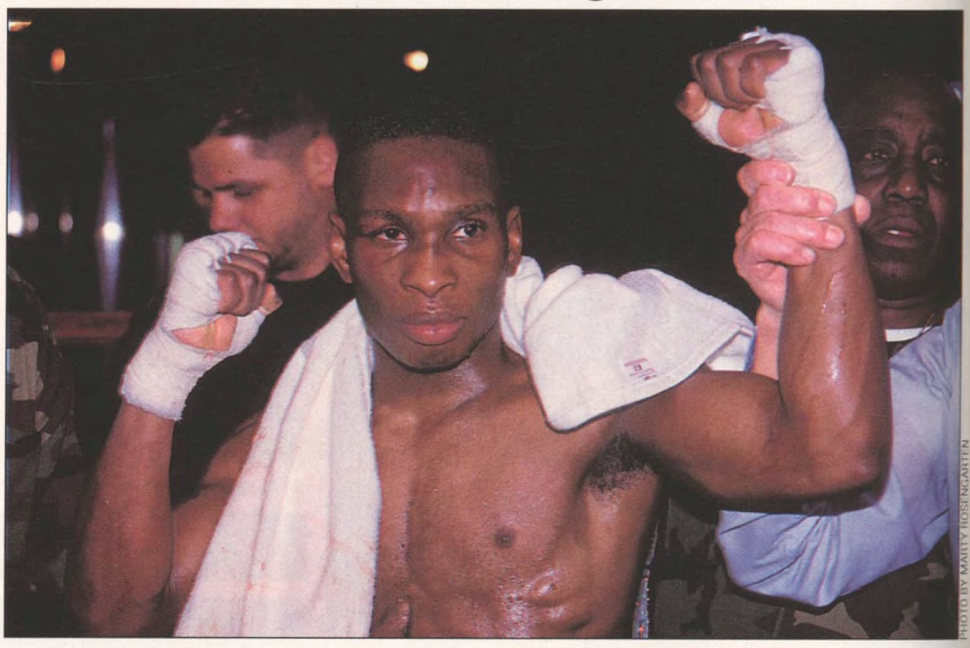


PHOTO BY ANDREW ROSENBLATT/HBO

By Joe Santoliquito

Clarence Vinson pretended to be imperious. He had no other choice. The former 2000 Olympian stood stoic and let the boos bounce off. He'd nod, then smile for the cameras. But standing there at center ring after a dreadful pro debut, Vinson did more than hear the boos; he felt them.

In his first four rounds as a pro, Vinson's Olympic bronze medal acclaim was muted. He tried jabbing, but his release wasn't as quick as he wanted. He tried avoiding punches, but his feet weren't working. Vinson even threw in a little showboating, figuring he had to energize the lethargic crowd, only to get booed. *Any moment now*, Vinson kept thinking, *I'll unzip myself and the true Clarence Vinson will emerge.*

Anxiety can do that. It can mangle a psyche to the point where it can make anyone who's done something well for most of their lives look wooden.

Regrettably for Vinson, his transformation occurred in front of thousands at Madison Square Garden's Theater and millions of HBO viewers, on an evening proclaimed "Night Of The Olympians." Vinson's confidence was shattered. What a way to begin a pro career. Judging by the reaction of the crowd afterward, you would have thought Vinson lost.

It's taken almost two years, but it seems the *true* Clarence Vinson has finally arrived. After his ignoble pro debut in January 2001 against a rangy Mexican southpaw named Adrian Valdez, the 5'2" bantamweight is settling in as a pro and

(Continued on page 63)

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PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

WARD-GATTI II

By Nigel Collins

If you could cook down the essence of the first Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti fight and load it into a syringe, you'd have the drug that hooks people on boxing. It was a shot of mayhem so pure that it left fight junkies euphoric and begging for another dose.

Now, thanks to HBO's deep pockets and the willingness of this magnificent pair of warriors to put body and soul on the line yet again, another fix is on the way. The scheduled date is November 23.

Nobody, least of all Gatti or Ward, is going to tell you that they're the best fighters in the world. They toil without benefit of the athletic grace of Floyd Mayweather, the unworldly reflexes of Roy Jones, and the masterful technical skill of Ricardo Lopez. But Ward and Gatti are capable of delivering the sort of excruciating excitement that transcends sport and speaks to our most primal instincts.

This is a feat few, if any, of the fighters currently ranked among THE RING'S

WARNING! THIS IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART!

Going for the gusto: First Ward (below) and then Gatti (above) land right hands during their epic 10-round battle at the Mohegan Sun in May. Together, they threw a total of 1,329 punches and connected with 615—350 for Gatti and 265 for Ward.

pound-for-pound best can accomplish with anything approaching regularity. While it's true that bouts between skillful boxers can be a sort of poetry in motion, throughout boxing history it has been the brawls and the brawlers that have hooked us and kept us coming back. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It's just the way we humans are hardwired; we can't help ourselves.

"Boxing is intrinsically the most interesting and compelling sport there is," said *Friday Night Fights* studio host Max Kellerman, launching into one of his favorite riffs. "If you come to a street corner, and on one corner the kids are playing stickball, and on the other corner guys are shooting hoops. On another somebody is putting a golf ball, but on the fourth corner there's a fistfight. Where is the crowd going to be? It's going to be around the guys fighting, every time."

The Ward-Gatti fight was an extreme example of the sort of thing Kellerman is talking about. Together, they created a kind of frenzied magic that transported those who saw them do battle to another level of consciousness, to a dimension where raw emotion overwhelms our veneer of civilization. We're back in the caveman days and loving every second of it.

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

"It's humbling to watch something like that," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "They give so much of themselves, it's as if they're skydiving without a parachute. Watching a fight like Ward-Gatti is so intense, you feel like you're part of it. Afterward, you feel like you need a shower and need to have your pulse checked. It stirs the juices in some way and moves us deeply."

How moving was it? Well, following their fight in May there was what amounted to a grassroots campaign to persuade HBO to pay them enough to make a rematch worthwhile. The general feeling was that if Ward and Gatti were willing to do it again, nothing less than seven figures apiece was acceptable. Kellerman and ESPN2's ringside analyst Teddy Atlas were at the forefront of this crusade.

"I called Teddy Atlas after the fight,

PHOTO BY HERBIE WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

Trainer Buddy McGirt wants to see Gatti fight more like he did against Terronn Millett in January (pictured), a performance that saw the Canadian slugger employ in-and-out movement and an improved defense, but still score an exciting knockout.

and said, 'Oh my God, this fight was incredible'," said Kellerman. "'These guys deserve at least seven figures for a rematch.' Teddy said, 'Let's make that an issue on next week's *Friday Night Fights*. Let's stump for them.' So we did."

They were not alone in their advocacy. A number of print journalists followed suit and fans wrote to THE RING and bombarded boxing Web sites with similar demands. Basically, it was a no-brainer. How could Ward and Gatti not fight again? It would be like not having Zale-Graziano II or Robinson-Basilio II or Ali-Frazier II. Some things simply have to happen. Ward-Gatti II is one of them.

Still, as we salivate over the prospect of another surreal shootout, you can't help wonder if we're being greedy, expecting

MICKY WARD'S GREATEST WARS

KO 7 Alfonso Sanchez, Las Vegas, Nevada, April 12, 1997: Following a two-year layoff, Ward was riding an eight-fight winning streak going into the Sanchez bout. The Mexican entered the ring a perfect 16-0 (15), and seemed well on his way to win number 17 after pitching a shutout the first 6½ rounds, landing 110 punches, compared to a paltry 22 for Ward.

Then, quicker than you can say "Irish Micky," Ward landed his 23rd punch, a scything left hook to body that collapsed Sanchez to the canvas, where he was counted out 1:53 into the seventh. The dramatic one-punch knockout earned Ward a shot at then-IBF junior welter titlist Vince Phillips.

KO 10 Reggie Green, Salem, New Hampshire, October 1, 1999: Green, coming off a competitive 12-round loss to then-WBA super lightweight beltholder Sharmba Mitchell, hoped to get right back into the title race by beating Ward, who was rebuilding again after a cut-eye TKO loss to Phillips.

Green almost ended things in the third, staggering Ward with a left. He continued to out-punch Ward in bristling two-way action, opening cuts on his cheek and lip. But the hard man from Lowell, Massachusetts, kept resolutely chipping away with his hook to the body, and by the start of the 10th, both fighters were close to exhaustion.

Trailing on two of the cards, Ward dug down and unleashed another miracle hook. The punch took all the remaining fight out of Green and sent him into a limp-kneed retreat. Somehow, he stayed upright, but was out on his feet and under heavy fire when the ref called a halt with 20 seconds to go in the fight.

KO 8 Shea Neary, London, England, March 11, 2000: In his lone pro fight outside of the U.S., Ward took on unbeaten ticker-seller Neary, who was gunning for his 23rd straight win.

It was toe-to-toe mayhem from the opening bell, as they ignored defense and took turns bashing the hell out of each other. Neary almost crumbled from one of Ward's rib-roasters in the first, but rallied to hurt Ward with a right to the head in the third. Back and forth they went, with both connecting with frightening regularity.

Ward seemed to be pulling ahead when Neary launched one final bid to turn it around at the start of the eighth. But the Yank would not be denied. He withstood the rush and floored the Englishman with a left uppercut. The dazed Neary beat the count, but was soon decked by Ward's followup volley, at which point the ref waved it off at the 2:55 mark.

W 10 Emanuel Burton, Hampton Beach, New Hampshire, July 13, 2001: What appeared as little more than a stay-busy tuneup for Ward going in turned into THE RING'S Fight of the Year.

For 10 electrifying rounds, Ward and Burton brutalized each other with an almost continual stream of punches. Surprisingly, Burton gave as good as he got, often brazenly standing in his opponent's power zone and out-punching him.

It was agonizingly close, but when Ward floored Burton with a left hook to the body in the ninth, it took some of the stink out of the insulting, one-sided scores the local judges awarded him. In fact, had it not been for the knockdown, a case could have been made for Burton winning, especially when his 10th-round rally is taken into consideration.

—NC

PHOTO BY ANGIE CARLINO

Burton samples Ward's hook

ARTURO GATTI'S GREATEST WARS

KO 6 Wilson Rodriguez, New York, New York, March 23, 1996: Gatti's first defense of the IBF 130-pound belt was almost his last, as Rodriguez came close to springing a massive upset. In the second round, with both eyes already swollen and cut, Gatti hit the deck, compliments of Rodriguez' right hand.

But you know Gatti; he bounced up and charged back into the thick of things. When he wasn't getting clobbered, Gatti fired back with his own bombs, finally flooring his challenger with a left hook to the ribs in the fifth. But he also lost a point for punching low in that round, and an upset still loomed large in the sixth when Gatti uncorked a left hook that caught Rodriguez flush on the chin and put him down for the count.

"I can't believe how he came back," said Wilson. Neither could anybody else.

KO 5 Gabe Ruelas, Atlantic City, New Jersey, October 4, 1997: Despite a troubled past that included the death of Jimmy Garcia and a kayo loss to Azumah Nelson, former WBC super featherweight titleholder Ruelas made a strong bid to take Gatti's IBF belt.

It was fairly even on the cards going into the fifth round, but Gatti, already bruised, swollen, and bleeding, was rocked and in immediate danger of going down when he conjured up a Hail Mary left hook. The punch floored the challenger, and even though he somehow managed to drag himself erect inside of the count, the referee looked into his glassy eyes and stopped the fight at the 2:22 mark.

The brief but terrific brawl was THE RING's Fight of the Year.

KO by 8 Angel Manfredy, Atlantic City, January 17, 1998: No longer able to make 130 pounds without weakening himself, Gatti moved up to lightweight to take on the streaking Manfredy, who was also moving up from junior lightweight.

The storyline for the fight was established in the first round when Manfredy ripped open a gaping gash over Gatti's left eye. Things got even worse when Manfredy scored a knockdown in the third, but Gatti fought through the gore and kept slinging hard shots.

Some felt that "El Diablo" was beginning to fade under Gatti's body assault. But the cut, worsened by Manfredy's stinging lead rights, grew so bad, the referee prevented the possibility of another come-from-behind victory by calling it off in the eighth.

L 10 Ivan Robinson, Atlantic City, August 22, 1998: Robinson, a 5-1 underdog, didn't wait for Gatti to get untracked. He charged out at the opening bell and instantly delivered a flurry of faceshots. Gatti answered back with a fusillade of his own, and the war was on.

Gatti began to bleed in the third, but he stormed back to floor Robinson in the fourth. They kept up a terrific pace the entire distance, throwing themselves at each other with reckless abandon. It was wonderful stuff, full of the sort of changes in fortune that are the earmarks of all great fights.

When it was over, CompuBox revealed that Robinson had landed 400 punches, compared to 274 for Gatti. Once again, Gatti was involved in THE RING's Fight of the Year, but this time he was on the losing end. The split decision rightfully went to Robinson by scores of 96-94, 98-93, and 93-96.

—NC

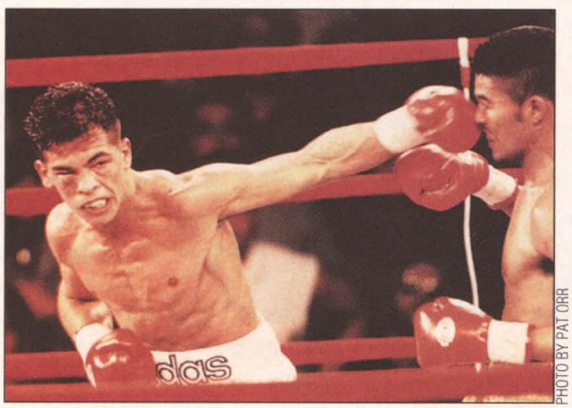

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

A one-eyed Gatti fires a hook at Rodriguez

Seems like Ward never gets an easy fight. In August 2000 he took on streaking prospect Antonio Diaz, losing a close decision to his younger, fresher opponent. Fighting at such a consistently high level is one of the reasons "Irish Micky" is so popular, win or lose.

Gatti and Ward to plumb such incredible depths once again.

Traditionally, rematches usually fail to live up to the originals, with one or both of the combatants fighting a far more circumspect fight the second time. This is especially true when the first meeting was particularly grueling, and it doesn't get any more grueling than Ward-Gatti I. But in their case, the chemistry is such that an exception to the rule is likely.

"It might sound crazy, but I enjoy those kinds of fights," admitted Ward. "I'd rather fight a fight like that than have somebody running around like Zab Judah did when he fought me. He drove me nuts."

Ironically, Gatti, heretofore renowned for his ability to walk through his opponent's best shots, would like nothing better

than to fight a little more like Judah, and a little less like, well, Arturo Gatti.

He surprised virtually everybody outside of his camp when he abandoned his face-first style against Terronn Millett in his last outing prior to the first Ward fight. The Millett bout was Gatti's first under new trainer Buddy McGirt, and it proved something of a revelation. Previous trainers had tried to persuade Gatti to abandon his reckless ways and return to the boxer-puncher style he'd used earlier in his career, but McGirt was the first to get positive results. Against Millett, Gatti used his jab, lateral movement, and angles to set up his powershots. It was difficult not to be impressed.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The scoring of the ninth round, in which Gatti dropped to a knee from a Ward bodyshot, was a major point of contention for some. Gatti still feels he deserved the win in the first fight.

"Whatever he says, I listen to him," said Gatti of the two-division former titleholder turned trainer. "Buddy's bringing back the boxing style I used to have. Every time we work together, we work on that. He knows how to drill it into my head."

Gatti tried to employ the same in-and-out, hands-high formula against Ward that had led to his fourth-round knockout of Millett. It worked for a while, but as the fight progressed, Ward's relentless pressure and crippling bodyshots forced Gatti to stand and trade more than he and McGirt had planned.

"Micky is very strong physically, and I got tired," said Gatti. "But for the second fight, I'll be in better condition, so I'll be able to box every round."

Sounds logical enough, but with Ward, 38-11 (27), in the other corner, it's not going to be so simple. The New England veteran is tough squared and never stops coming. There will be no new strategy for him. With Ward, what you see is what you get.

"I'm gonna be 37 by the time we fight. I'm not gonna learn nothing more now. It's kinda late for that," Ward said with a chuckle. "But I need more head movement and I've got to get off to a faster start. I can't let him throw five or six punches and not throw back. I either have to throw when he's throwing or initiate it more."

The frenzied back-and-forth action of the their first fight was so continual, many of the rounds were close and difficult to score. Although the majority decision went to Ward by scores of 94-93 (Dick Flaherty), 95-93 (Steve Weisfeld), and 94-94 (Frank Lombardi), not everybody thought the right guy got the nod. Understandably enough, Gatti was among the dissenters

"When I was in the ring, I felt it was very close," said Gatti, whose record slipped to 34-6 (28). "But when I watched it on tape, I thought I won seven of the 10 rounds, six if you give him all the close rounds."

It was, however, far too great of a fight to be dragged down by a scoring controversy, so the bitching was minimal. But there was some legitimate debate concerning the scoring of the heart-stopping ninth round, in which Ward dropped Gatti early with—what else?—his trademark left hook to the body.

Gatti beat the count, but was then subjected to a fearsome pounding. Just when it looked like Gatti was ready to cave, however, he rallied back with a two-fisted barrage of his own that momentarily caught Ward by surprise and sent him reeling. Then, as the round drew to a close, Ward regained control and dealt such a vicious beating that at one point McGirt was on his way up the ring steps, white towel in hand moments before the bell.

Lombardi and Weisfeld each scored the round in favor of Ward by 10-8 margins. Flaherty, however, gave Ward a 10-7 advantage. Had he scored the round the same as his colleagues, the fight would have been a draw.

Although he's generally a happy-go-lucky kind of guy, Gatti still seemed genuinely upset over the loss when he spoke with THE RING in late-July. He was back in the gym two weeks after the fight, eager to lay the groundwork for success the second time around, working diligently on the moves McGirt is teaching him.

"It really bothered me that I had to lose that fight," said Gatti. "I'm not even supposed to be here. People said that I was done a few years ago, but I'm still here, and I'm better than I ever was. This time it will be different."

It would be wrong to mistake Gatti's resolve for bitterness. He and Ward have nothing but admiration for each other. This aspect of their personalities added another layer of enjoyment to their first fight. The generosity and warmth between them during the postfight interviews made you proud to be a boxing fan. (How often do you have a chance to say that?) When Gatti and Ward met at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn for this issue's cover shoot, they greeted one another as friends and seemed to genuinely enjoy being in each other's company.

Anybody who has studied the Sweet Science knows that the body and the mind work as one in the boxing ring. In large part, it's because Gatti and Ward are the sort of men they are, that they're capable of giving so much of themselves. But that kind of courage comes at a cost, which is the reason why Merchant said that he "almost didn't want to see it again." And it's why HBO Sports Vice President of Programming Kery Davis initially joked that he wasn't a sadist, when asked about a rematch in the immediate aftermath of the first fight.

Who knows what price the participants will ultimately pay in terms of their long-term health? A sobering thought, to be sure. But taking risks is part and parcel of the fight game, and few take as many risks as Ward and Gatti. Or provide as many thrills.

"In the spectrum of fights we see, a fight like Ward-Gatti is the rarest," said Merchant. "It's almost like we have a duty to bear witness."

Fans of the Roy Jones school of boxing may want to avert their eyes. Most of us boxing junkies can't wait. ■

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SUMMER BUMMER

We Wanted Fireworks And We Got Duds

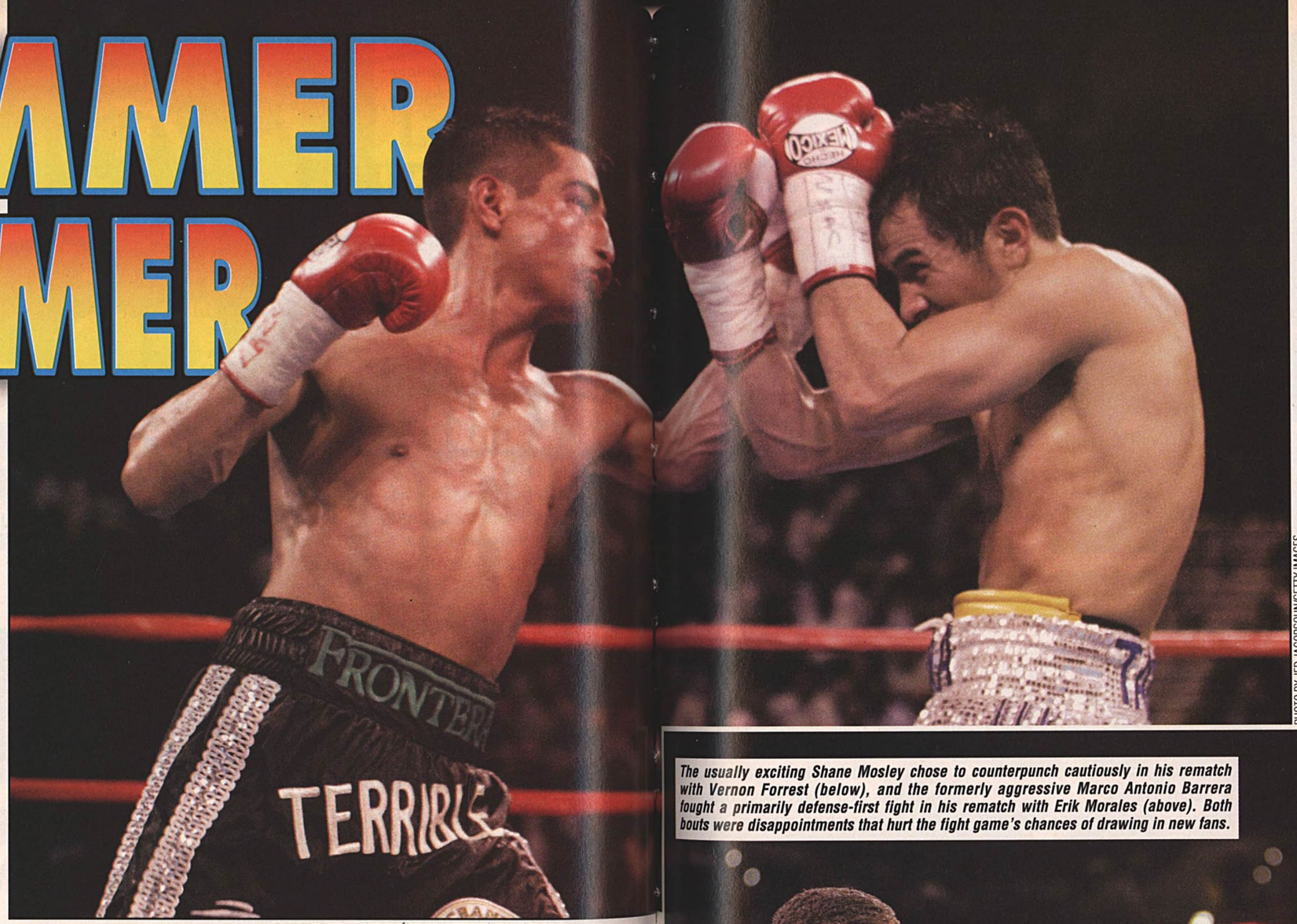


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

By William Dettloff

The summer of 2002 was going to be a wonderful summer. At its inauguration, Lennox Lewis beat the bully out of Mike Tyson, maybe once and for all in the richest fight in the history of fighting. At its end, three months later, Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas finally would get together to settle an old grudge and at the same time give us what all logic said would be a hell of a fight. But that was only the half of it. In between, four of the best fighters anywhere would get together to decide world championships in rematches to sizzling first installments: Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales at featherweight, Vernon Forrest and Shane Mosley at welterweight. It was going to be a wonderful summer.

How could we lose? Barrera-Morales I had been a savage battle, as good a lower-weight prize fight as we'd seen since Wilfredo Gomez and Lupe Pintor beat one another silly 20 years ago. Their animosity had only grown since, had in fact come to a head at a press conference when the two traded blows. There was every reason to believe the rematch would be as good as the first.

Forrest and Mosley? Their first fight wasn't as competitive as Barrera-Morales I had been. But it was plenty compelling, and we all wanted to see if Mosley was right about how damaging that headbutt was the first time around, even if it sounded like the kind of excuse beaten fighters make when they know they've been whipped. Besides that, Mosley had always had the look to him of a potential all-time great. If you believed he was, that he had some real Sugar in him, then you believed he might turn things around against Forrest in the rematch. Or at the very least, turn it into a dramatic, Leonard-Hearns type fight. How could it be anything but a wonderful summer?

You know by now how it turned out. It wasn't a wonderful summer. It was a crappy one. Or at the least, one that wasn't nearly as good as we hoped it would be, or as it should have been. Barrera, in keeping with recent tendencies, chose to box against Morales. He's a good boxer. It worked great against Naseem Hamed and Enrique Sanchez. It wasn't what we wanted against Morales. But it's what we got, and by the end, half of us thought the judges, Mike Glienna, Duane Ford, and Chuck Giampa, screwed Morales this time by handing in scores of 115-113, 115-113, and 116-112 in favor of Barrera.

Barrera jabbed. He waited. He counterpunched. He rarely charged headlong into Morales' best weaponry, which was the kind of impractical stuff that made the first fight so savagely enjoyable. Morales, 41-1 (31), seemed more willing than Barrera, 55-3 (39), to make a fight of it, but what could he do? If your partner wants to waltz, you're going to waltz some of the time apparently, even if waltzing is none of your business. So it was a dud. But hey, the summer wasn't over. We still had Forrest-Mosley II a couple of weeks later. That would make up for Barrera-Morales II, right?

Wrong. There was no second-round headbutt from Forrest, 35-0 (26), this time. Coincidentally or not, there were no blitzkrieg right hands from him either, and as a result no knockdowns and no concussion-induced haze through which Mosley,

The usually exciting Shane Mosley chose to counterpunch cautiously in his rematch with Vernon Forrest (below), and the formerly aggressive Marco Antonio Barrera fought a primarily defense-first fight in his rematch with Erik Morales (above). Both bouts were disappointments that hurt the fight game's chances of drawing in new fans.

PHOTO BY BRIAN BAHR/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Although Zab Judah-Omar Weis wasn't a superfight like some other recent duds, it was a perfect example of a once-exciting fighter becoming dull because of an increasing reluctance toward getting hit. Judah kept his distance and decisioned Weis, but his stock went down in victory.

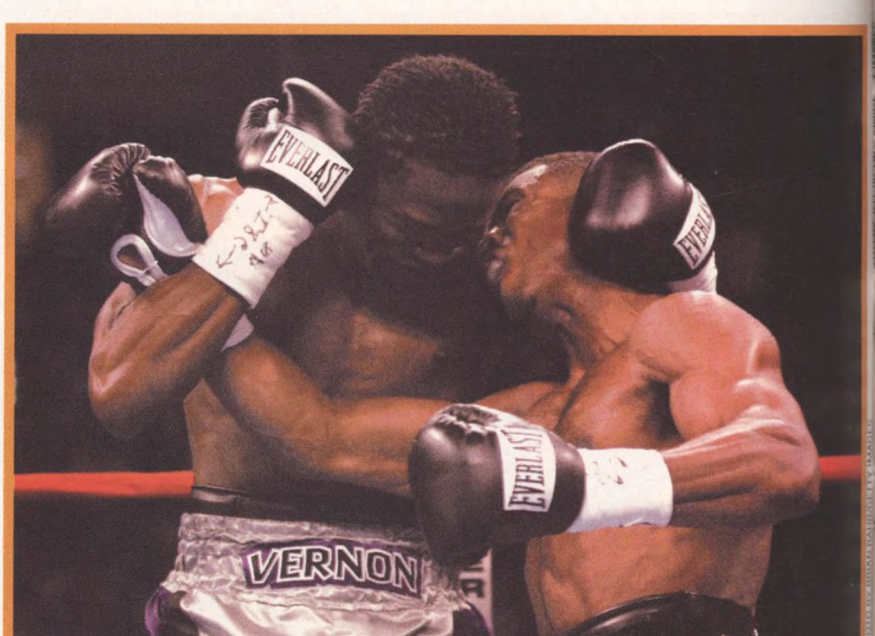
38-2 (35), had to fight. Aside from the first two punches of the fight—a surprise left-hook, right cross from Mosley—there weren't a whole lot of punches to get excited about. But there was a lot of clinching, if that's what you're into. And wrestling, too. There was a lot of grappling and a lot of feinting and sweating and all the things that take place sometimes in a ring—except for clean, effective punching. You'd have thought it was John Ruiz and Evander Holyfield in the ring again, rather than the world's two best 147-pound fighters. Either way, Forrest did what little business got done, winning by tallies of 117-111 (Tony Castellano), 116-112 (Gary Merritt), and 115-113 (Jerry Roth). By the end, Mosley wasn't the only one who was happy to have it done with. Impossibly, we were too.

Just for good measure, in between those fights, Zab Judah made his first appearance since Kostya Tszyu starched him last November. Now maybe you think Judah's a potential superstar, maybe you think he's the junior welterweight reincarnation of Eddie Hopson. Either way, he can be an exciting fighter. He's quick, powerful, easy to hit hard early in a fight, and likely to go down if you catch him right. It's because he's all over the place. So you figured we had that to look forward to, too. Wrong again. A toned-down, almost sedate Judah, 28-1 (21) with 1 no-contest, turned in a workmanlike performance in taking a unanimous decision over tough Omar Weis, 35-4-3 (16), by scores of 97-93 (Elmo Adolph), 97-92 (Randy Phillips), and 96-93 (David Taranto). Yawn. What's the world coming to?

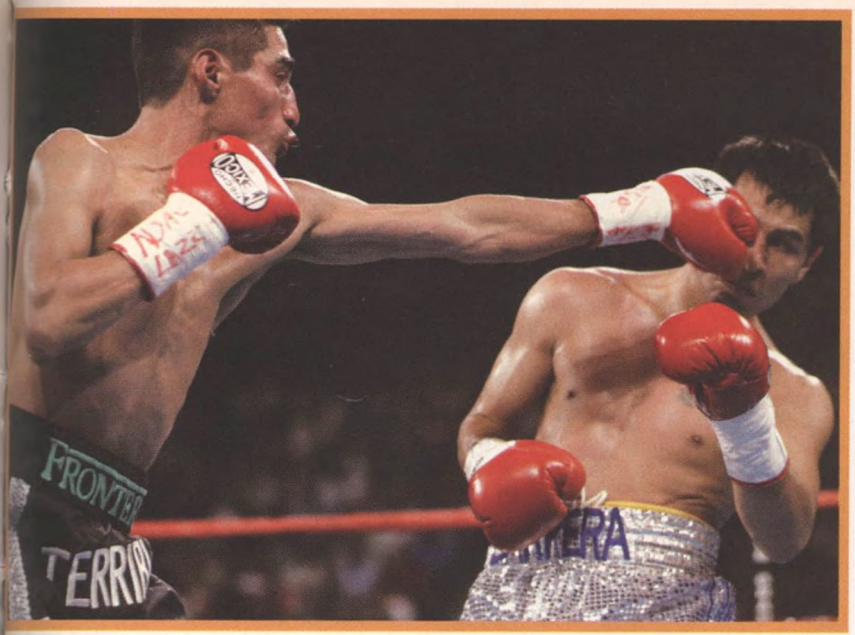
At a time when the fight game is all but dead according to everything we read and hear out of the mainstream media, we don't need surprises—especially bad ones. Sure, it's good when a fight we're not expecting much from turns out to be a thriller. But if we're not expecting much out of it, you know the casual fight fan isn't either, so he's not watching. So when we're expecting something big and maybe trying to loop some of our boxing-hating friends into the fraternity, maybe by promising them that this or that fight will make an NBA playoff game look like a colonoscopy, we need that fight to come through. We need it to be something special. Barrera-Morales II, Forrest-Mosley II, and the return of Judah were not special. They were ordinary. (Forrest-Mosley II was probably less than ordinary, in fact.) With their performances, none of those five fighters sold a ticket to their next fight. And that doesn't help anybody.

It didn't help that Barrera-Morales and Forrest-Mosley were rematches. As much as we gear up for returns, as susceptible as we are to the hard sell that convinces us that a sequel will be every bit as good as the first, we know from history that that's almost never the case. In film and in boxing and in most things, real genius is captured almost by accident, and when someone tries to recreate it, it just doesn't work.

"It's inevitable that rematches are more tactical than their predecessors because the fighters know each other better," said HBO



The Forrest-Mosley rematch was especially ugly because there was so much clinching. Welterweight champ Forrest is known for a tendency to tie opponents up, but the suddenly mortal Sugar Shane turned into a boxer-clincher as well for an evening.



After the powerpunching war Barrera and Morales had the first time around, it was surprising to see so many jabs thrown in the rematch. Though Morales tried to make a fight out of it, Barrera wouldn't give in until the late stages of the contest.

PHOTO BY BRIAN BAHR/GETTY IMAGES

blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley. "Some go into the first fight trying to impose their will on the other fighter. The second time, it's tactical. Shane Mosley, having discovered what he discovered in the first fight against Forrest, tried going in with a different frame of mind in the rematch, just as Marco Antonio Barrera did in his rematch against Morales."

You couldn't blame Mosley. He was outfought all night the first time, largely because he stood in front of the larger, rangier Forrest and walked into right hands. He had to do something different, and he and his father employed two pieces of strategy that, theoretically, were sound. First, he circled to his right, away from Forrest's right cross. That was the punch, along with the uppercut, that gave him so much trouble the first time, so the movement made sense—don't let Forrest throw it. Second, Mosley made Forrest, a natural counterpuncher, do the leading. Another good plan: Take away your opponent's strength. Make him do what he's not comfortable doing.

The problem was Forrest wouldn't bite. He knew what Mosley was doing. So he

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Summer Bummer

(Continued from page 31)

waited for Mosley to punch. Mosley waited for him to punch. One of the things that makes this business so compelling to watch is the unfolding of battle plans and the give-and-take of the strategies and counter-strategies. Mosley's more natural tendency is to attack. But he knew he couldn't. He had to wait. And when you get two guys who want to wait and counterpunch, things get ugly. This was ugly. Neither guy came off looking good, but Forrest did what he had to better than Mosley did.

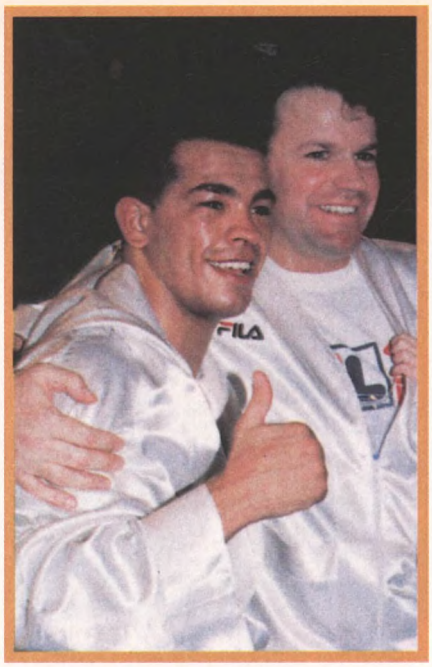
So you could understand where Mosley was coming from. Even if his strategy would make for a rotten fight, he was doing what he believed would give him his best chance to win. How do you explain Barrera? By most unofficial counts, he'd beaten Morales in their first fight. And he did it by brawling. Why change in the rematch? Dance with the one who brought you and all that.

"I think some of it was not wanting to put himself through that again," said Lampley. "Especially if he didn't have to."

Maybe that's our fault. Everyone praised Barrera so much for boxing against Hamed, we skewed his thinking. Most times a guy will score a knockout and fall in love with his punch. Barrera went the other way—he found out he could jab and counter and he forgot that often times, and especially against Morales, aggression, forward movement, and a hook upside the head will do the trick. As it turned out, Barrera re-discovered his old self just enough in the later rounds to get the decision. But by then, anyone who wasn't hardcore had already turned the fight off for lack of sustained action.

It may be that we set ourselves up to be disappointed by these big rematches. Not only because rematches usually are duds, but because we expect more from the fighters than they can give.

"Everybody is overhyping these guys. It's not just boxing, it's all sports," said Philadelphia-based promoter and ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* matchmaker J Russell Peltz. "HBO is really guilty of that stuff. Is Vernon Forrest the next Thomas Hearns? Take a deep breath. Hearns was a hell of a fighter who fought and beat a lot of top guys. People are comparing Mosley to Sugar Ray Robinson? You can't compare a guy with 30 fights to a guy with 200 fights. And you can't compare the eras. They're not even close."



Pat Lynch (right), the manager of Arturo Gatti, knows just how lucrative it can be for a fighter to be exciting in defeat. Gatti has six losses on his record, but he's still a million-dollar fighter because viewers know he will never be boring.

Peltz makes an interesting point. Consider: Robinson fought a lot of rematches—with Carmen Basilio, with Gene Fullmer, with Jake LaMotta, with Bobo Olson, with Randy Turpin. Really, he fought most of the top welterweights and middleweights from his era more than once. Like all fighters, he wasn't magic every time out. But a rematch wasn't an automatic snorefest with Robinson. Most of the time, it was just as good as the first time around. This too: The drop-off from Leonard-Hearns I to Leonard-Hearns II wasn't that significant. Maybe in terms of skill level it wasn't as good; both guys were older and heavier. But Leonard-Hearns II was a dramatic, exciting struggle. Forrest and Mosley might have been booed out of the ring had they followed the Leonard-Hearns rematch.

Still, most rematches are duds, and we probably should give Barrera, Morales, Forrest, and Mosley the benefit of the doubt. Barrera and Mosley especially always have been exciting, aggressive fighters who chose, at what was probably a bad time, certain strategies that weren't particularly pleasing to the eye. It wasn't good for the fans, or for the television networks, or for the game. But is it a fighter's obligation to be exciting every time out? Should the fight game's long-term health be his concern? While he's trying to keep his head from getting knocked off, should he worry about selling a ticket to his next fight?

Certainly, Judah's case is unique. One of the very characteristics that has made him a moderately exciting fighter—his vulnerability, borne of a frequently careless, frenetic style—is what was his undoing against Tszyu. Everybody says he should get his hands up and his chin down and stop playing so much. Concentrate. He does that against Weis, a very tough contender, and decisions him, and now he's boring. Should he care?

"A fighter's primary goal is to win," said Pat Lynch, the manager of Arturo Gatti, a fighter frequently and happily accused of sacrificing victory, not to mention his long-term health, to make things exciting for the fans. "The fighter goes to camp for 10 or 12 weeks and comes up with a game plan that will give him the best chance to win the fight. That's what he's there for—to win, to climb up the ratings, and get a title shot. That's the goal. As a fan, I can understand how a boring fight isn't great to watch. But as a fighter, your job is to win."

Though Lynch says it's never been a conscious decision on Gatti's part to deliberately fight in an exciting way rather than one that would better assure a win, it's worked for him. "As crazy as it sounds, it's been more lucrative. He can get what he gets from the networks because they know whet they're going to get when he fights."

But Gatti is an anomaly. "We all understand what's great and unique about a fight like Gatti vs. Micky Ward," said Lampley. "At the same time, we all agree that we wouldn't want to go through that. If a guy can find a safety-first way to do it, it's good business. When Ray Leonard and I worked together, he always told me there is no other responsibility other than winning the fight. People used to fault Lennox Lewis for being overcautious, and look where he is now."

Where does that leave us? Where does it leave the game? Only the hardcore can appreciate the fine skills and strategies that sometimes make a can't-miss fight one that you wished you'd missed. We shouldn't fret, though. Good fights will always be there. They might be harder to find and they might be surprises. But they'll be there.

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HBO VP MARK TAFFET
A Bird's Eye View Of Boxing On PPV

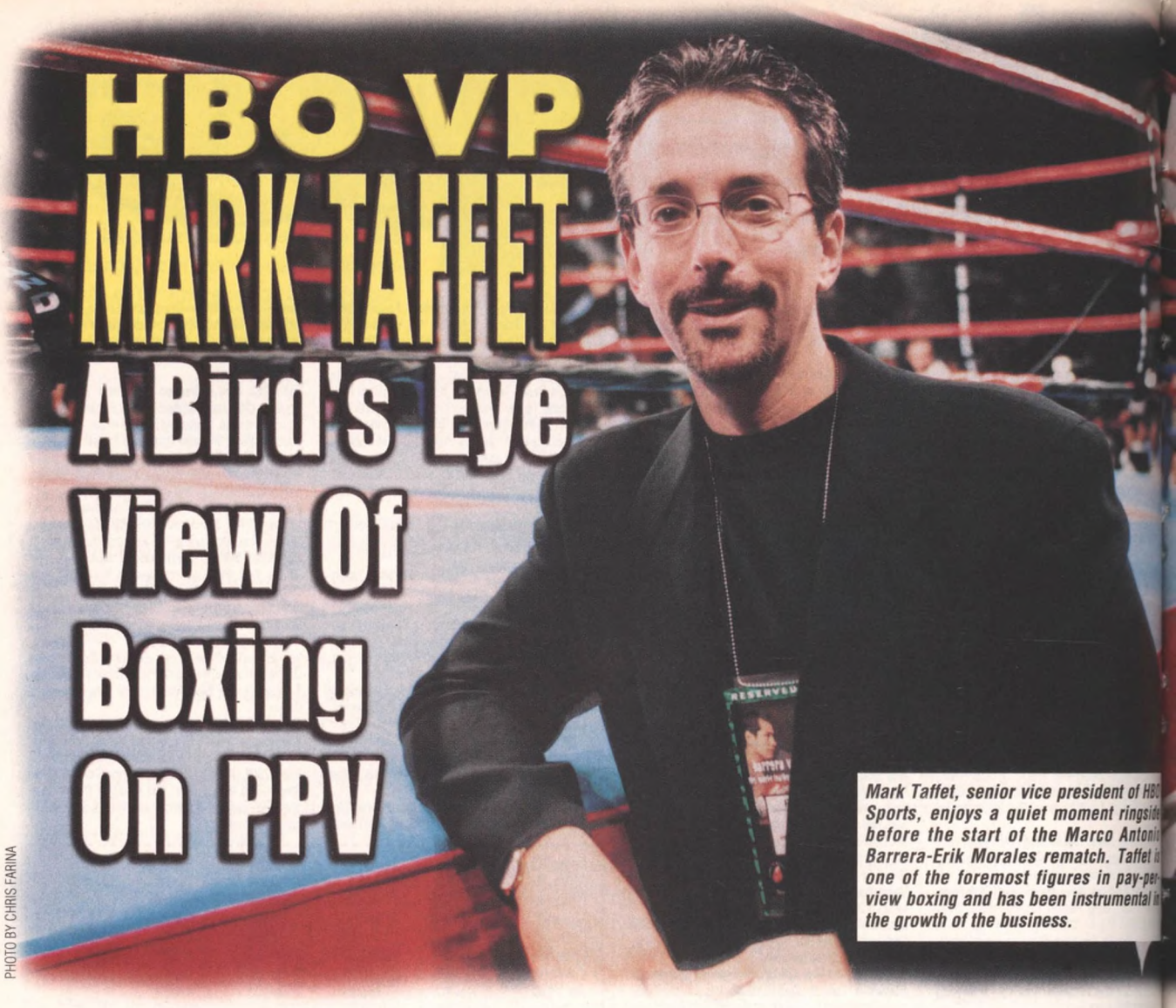


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mark Taffet, senior vice president of HBO Sports, enjoys a quiet moment ringside before the start of the Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales rematch. Taffet is one of the foremost figures in pay-per-view boxing and has been instrumental in the growth of the business.

By Nigel Collins

It would be misleading to say that Mark Taffet learned everything he needed to know about the pay-per-view industry as a kid working in his family's restaurant business. But some very pertinent lessons did sink in.

"The restaurant business is basically a 24-hour operation," said Taffet, senior vice president of HBO Sports. "But you do all your business in two or three one-hour periods. Success or failure depends on your ability to handle the flow during those rushes. It's the same thing with a pay-per-view fight."

Taffet, 45, grew up in suburban New Jersey "addicted to sports," the kind of kid who used to go bed "with a radio under my pillow listening to Marv Albert and the Knicks." But Taffet never dreamed he'd end up as one of the most powerful players in the PPV boxing industry. In fact, for a while it looked like he'd be stuck selling frozen vegetables.

Armed with an economics degree from Rutgers, an MBA from the Wharton Business School, and a year's worth of experience at Colgate Palmolive, Taffet went to work for General Foods in new product development. Part of his job was designing new packages for Birds Eye frozen vegetables, which included going to his local A&P and talking to customers.

"As they walked down the aisle, I'd ask them what they thought of our vegetables," said Taffet. "Was our corn yellower than Green Giant? But I really didn't identify with the product; I didn't have a passion for it."

But in 1983, Taffet went to work for HBO and his career took a dramatic turn. He might not have realized it at first, but he had found a product he could be passionate about.

Tracking Taffet's career at HBO is also an excellent way of charting the growth of PPV boxing. Working in increasing positions of responsibility in the financial department, Taffet spearheaded the development of a sophisticated computer program he called a "subscriber life" model.

"It took into account new subscribers, existing subscribers, and their economic and consumer behavior," explained Taffet. "I put dollars and cents to it by doing research with our market research department, and figured out how long people stayed with HBO. And when I went to programmers at HBO's sports department, they said, 'Oh, my God. You've helped us find a way to spend money.' Because as a programmer, you want to spend money,

and I'd given them a model to show that it was okay to spend money."

Originally, Taffet's research had been aimed at finding out how much money HBO could spend on NFL games, but it wasn't long before it had a significant impact on the way the cable network distributed boxing.

"This was around 1990, '91, and while there were only 8- to 10-million pay-per-view homes, HBO began to see a dramatic increase in licensing fees, driven by this new television outlet called pay-per-view."

Prior to the advent of PPV, big fights were shown on closed-circuit TV. This meant fans had to go to an arena, theater, or bar, where they watched the fight on a huge screen that generally gave them a terrible picture and even worse sound. But as PPV gradually became available in certain major markets, it started to generate multiples of the revenue that could be produced by closed-circuit. The reason pay-per-view proved so popular was simple: It was a far superior delivery system. But in April '91, when Evander Holyfield defended the heavyweight championship against George Foreman on PPV, Taffet had to call on all of the organizational skills he'd first honed working in his family's restaurant—and then some.

"That was the first pay-per-view megafight in history," said Taffet. "We had no idea how big that fight would be. We knew the week of the fight that we had something special, but we weren't sure it would be successful. Cable systems around the country were calling, telling us they had never seen such a volume of calls or, as the case was in those days, the volume of people lining up to get converter boxes. They were overwhelmed, and we had no idea if the orders would be fulfilled in time to watch the fight.

"It was one of the scariest experiences I've ever had in my life, because there was no model for distribution. We had never done national distribution on pay-per-view, only regional business. We had to go to each cable system and design from scratch how to sell the fight, how to collect revenue, how to deliver the signal. We broke virgin ground on that fight."

Despite the logistical nightmare, Holyfield-Foreman turned out to be a huge success, with 1.4 million homes buying the PPV at $35.95 a pop.

"That is the night that the pay-per-view event business was truly born," said Taffet.

While the Holyfield-Foreman fight was a gigantic PPV success, HBO, still struggling to get a handle on the fledgling industry, quickly learned that putting a fight on pay-per-view didn't automatically turn it into a blockbuster. A month after Holyfield-Foreman, HBO telecast the James Toney-Michael Nunn fight on PPV with disappointing results.

"Only 19,000 people bought that fight, so we learned a lot about the pay-per-view business in two months," said Taffet. "We found out that either an event is huge or it isn't, and when it's not, you'd better be careful."

There is, however, a PPV middle ground that can be highly profitable, albeit on a far smaller scale that Holyfield-Foreman and the heavyweight extravaganzas that have followed. In 1993, Taffet, in conjunction with Top Rank's Bob Arum and Forum Boxing's John Jackson, tested the Latino market for the first time by distributing the first Michael Carbajal-Chiquita Gonzalez fight via PPV. Once

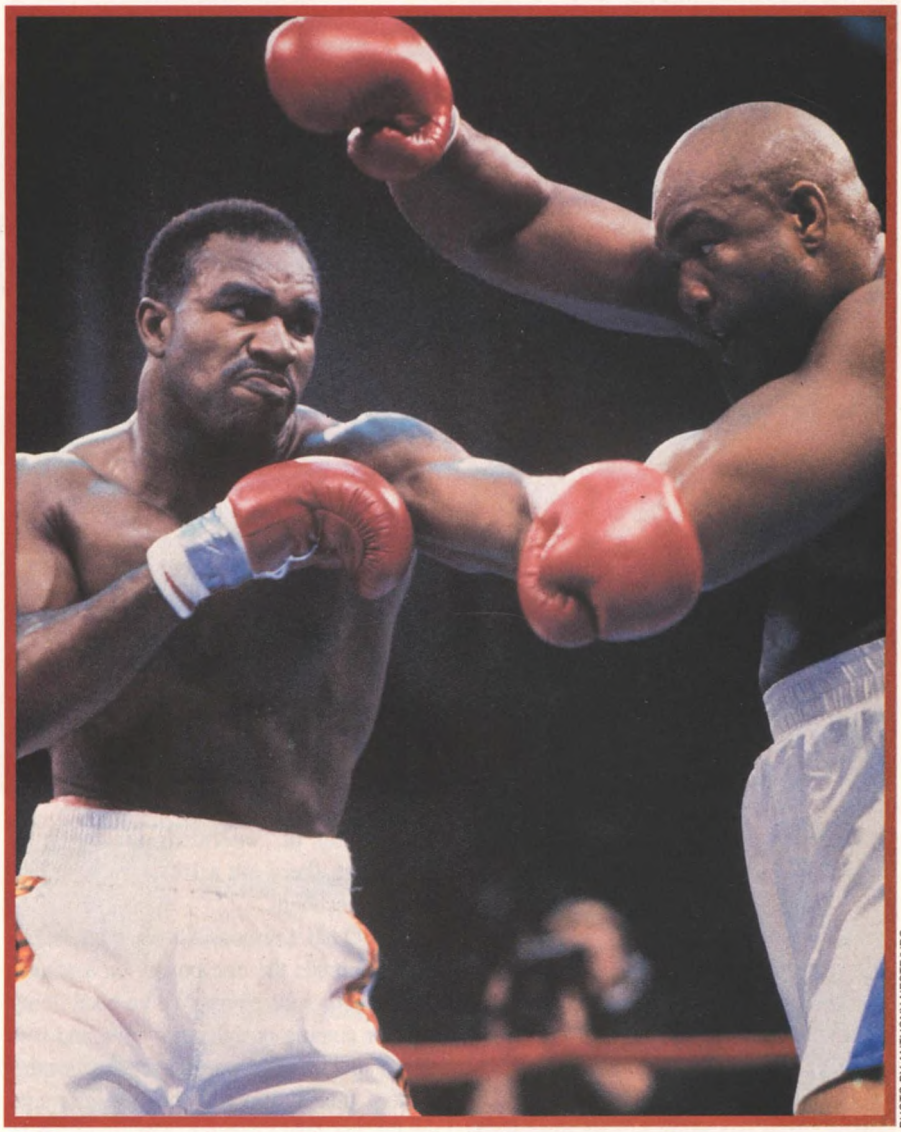


PHOTO BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

The heavyweight title fight between Evander Holyfield and George Foreman in 1991 was the first pay-per-view blockbuster and gave birth to the PPV industry as we know it today. Even now, more than 10 years later, it still ranks high on the all-time list of PPV moneymakers.

PHOTO BY NASSER KHAN

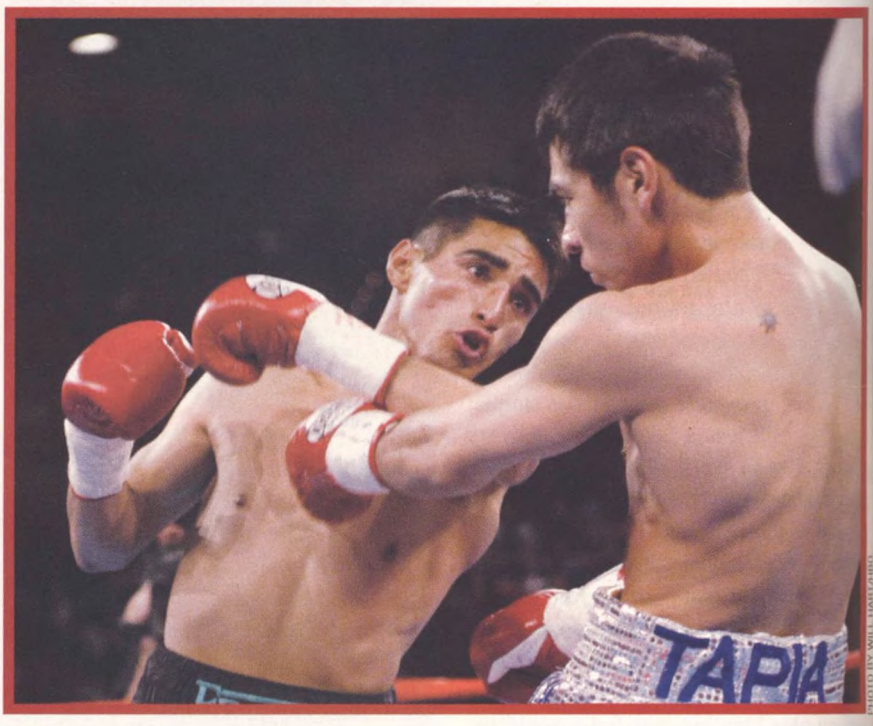


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The 1993 junior flyweight bout between Michael Carbajal and Chiquita Gonzalez (above) proved that PPV shows targeted at the Latino market could do big business. The success of Carbajal-Gonzalez has led to a string of similar PPV events, including the recent rematch between Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales (right).

again they were in uncharted territory and had no idea how well the fight would sell. There were about 20 million PPV homes by that time, and the fight generated nearly 200,000 buys at $24.95 each. That's major money for guys weighing 108 pounds.

"Afterward, Bob, John, and I looked at each other and said, 'Oh, my God. There's a business here,'" recalled Taffet.

The ability of lighter-weight fighters to pull down big bucks on PPV reached new heights in April 2001 when approximately 325,000 homes purchased the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed featherweight fight, making it the richest match between 126-pounders in history. Barrera came close to equaling that number in his June 2002 rematch with Erik Morales, which did approximately 300,000 buys.

So how does HBO decide which fights to put on PPV and which fights to telecast on *World Championship Boxing*, the network's boxing flagship?

"Many people think pay-per-view means pot of gold, but it's not true," said Taffet. "Pay-per-view is just one more means of distribution. The biggest fights will go to pay-per-view because that's the only means of generating the revenue. After that, there are a lot of variables to take into account.

"HBO has a responsibility and an obligation to provide the best boxing on a regular basis to our subscribers. We've been doing that for coming on 30 years now, and it is one of the most important factors in consumers' minds as to why they retain or sign up for the HBO service. For many male heads of households, boxing is what drives the decision, and we take that very seriously. So by and large, our preference is to put fights on HBO.

"Then there are fights that are more targeted than the fights we would typically put on HBO for a broader demographic. What pay-per-view offers in these cases are slots and the ability to make revenue that wouldn't otherwise be there. Barrera-Morales II is a great example. That's a fight HBO would love to deliver, nine out of 10 times, on the HBO service, but now that there are about 50 million pay-per-view homes [in the U.S.], you can generate many, many millions of dollars on pay-per-view."

Even fighters who have not proven to be particularly strong PPV draws can make substantial money fighting on PPV. Take Roy Jones for example. While his PPV numbers have been nothing to rave about, they've been good enough to put money in his pocket. In certain cases, Jones' paycheck from PPV fights that have sold between 160,000 and 200,000 buys has been less than his regular HBO license fee. But it's important to keep in mind that these bouts have been in addition to his set number of regular HBO appearances, and have generated more money than he could have made via any other outlet.

"Roy could have that third or fourth fight in a given year on basic cable or broadcast television, but the numbers would pale in comparison to even a mediocre

number of pay-per-view buys," said Taffet.

Due to the way the system works, confusion sometimes clouds the exact number of PPV buys from a fight. Originally, Taffet estimated that approximately 250,000 homes purchased Barrera-Hamed, but later increased that figure by a whopping 75,000 buys. What gives?

"Over the years we have developed a computer model to project pay-per-view buys," said Taffet. "It's not unlike the election return model that is used to predict winners on the night of an election, but you have to look at the regionality of a fight. On a Hispanic fight, you get a tremendous concentration of business in a few markets. So you have huge highs and lows. You could do a six-percent buy rate in one market, and a 0.5 in others.

"In the case of Barrera-Hamed, we went into the fight believing that it would skew very much like our previous Hispanic fights. We presumed that the non-Hispanic markets would be deep valleys. But Hamed had more appeal in those non-Hispanic markets than we anticipated, and as a result, when we gathered the figures a week or so after our original press report, we had to revise them to reflect that.

"The media is always pushing us to give them a figure a day or two after a fight. My preference is to wait 10 to 12 days after a fight to give a number that I believe will always be within two or three percent of the actual figure."

While a misleading figure in the media isn't that big of a deal, it could lead to all sorts of problems when dealing with superstar fighters who get a percentage of the PPV revenue, above and beyond their guaranteed purse, after the sales rise above a contractually set number. But even though there are millions of dollars at stake in such circumstances, it's pretty much based on an honor system.

"It involves a lot of trust," admitted Taffet. "I've worked very, very hard over 10

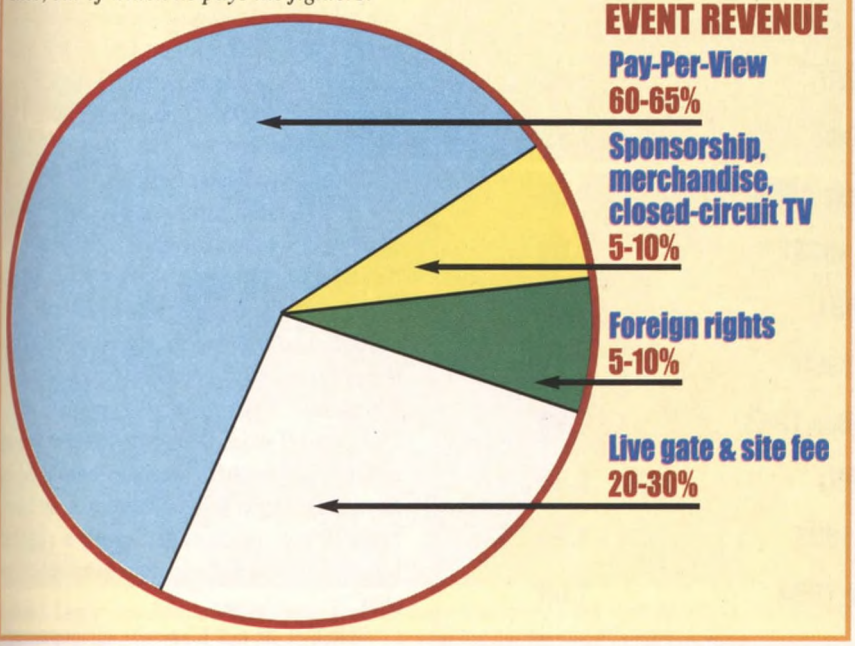
(Continued on page 38)

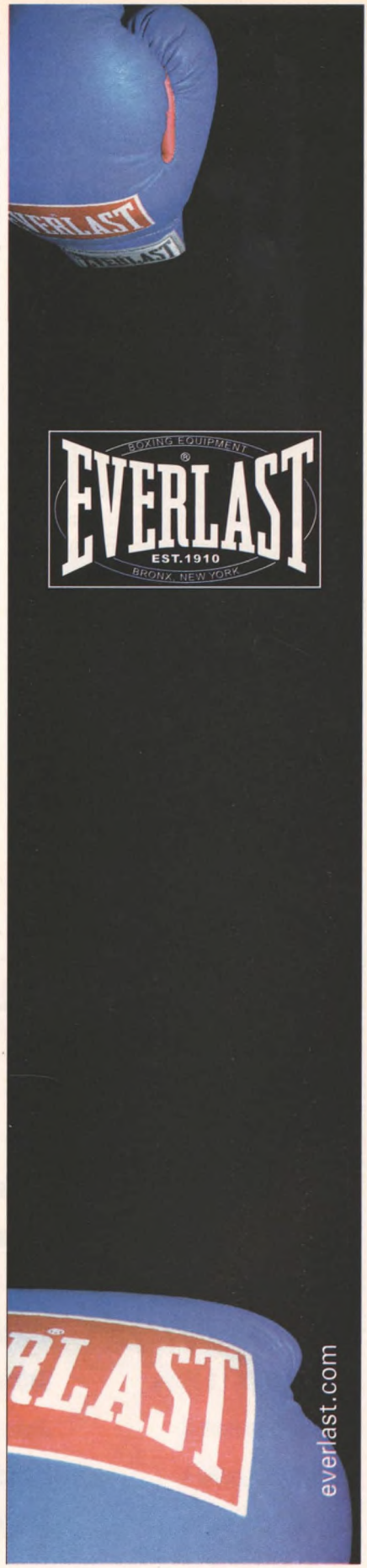
THE MONEY PIE

The money generated by a pay-per-view fight is divided between the PPV network, such as HBO Pay-Per-View, and the carriers, which include cable systems and satellite systems. A fee also goes to PPV distributor In Demand, which acts as a conduit for the network. The PPV network gets between 53 and 55 percent of the loot, while 45 to 47 percent goes to the carriers, out of which In Demand is paid.

But while PPV provides the largest chunk of the money, there are several other vital sources that fatten the event pot. The accompanying chart breaks down these sources and shows the percent each contributes to the overall revenue.

Depending on the contractual particulars, the promoter gets a juicy piece of every slice, out of which he pays the fighters.





Pay-Per-View

(Continued from page 37)

years to earn that trust with the people we work with. I always want to estimate conservatively, because I don't want the fighters or promoters to walk away expecting too much money, and then not receive it. It sets in motion a bad chain of events."

Everything Taffet has learned in the PPV business was put into play leading up to the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson fight. When Las Vegas declined to host the fight following an unseemly brawl at the New York City press conference, a lot of people thought the fight would be scrapped. But as soon as Lewis told HBO that he was still committed to the fight, Taffet and everybody else involved threw themselves into overdrive, working around the clock to pull together what ultimately turned out to be the largest-grossing fight in history.

"You always have anxieties about a fight," said Taffet. "But the anxiety here for me was not so much whether or not the fight would happen, but the amount of thought and work that had to go into making sure it happened as safely as possible. We had a lot riding that night for the sport. We needed things to go well."

Besides Tyson's unpredictable behavior, holding the fight in Memphis, Tennessee, which had never hosted a fight anywhere approaching the magnitude of Lewis-Tyson, could have been a disaster. Fortunately for the sport, Memphis did an outstanding job and the fight came off without any catastrophes.

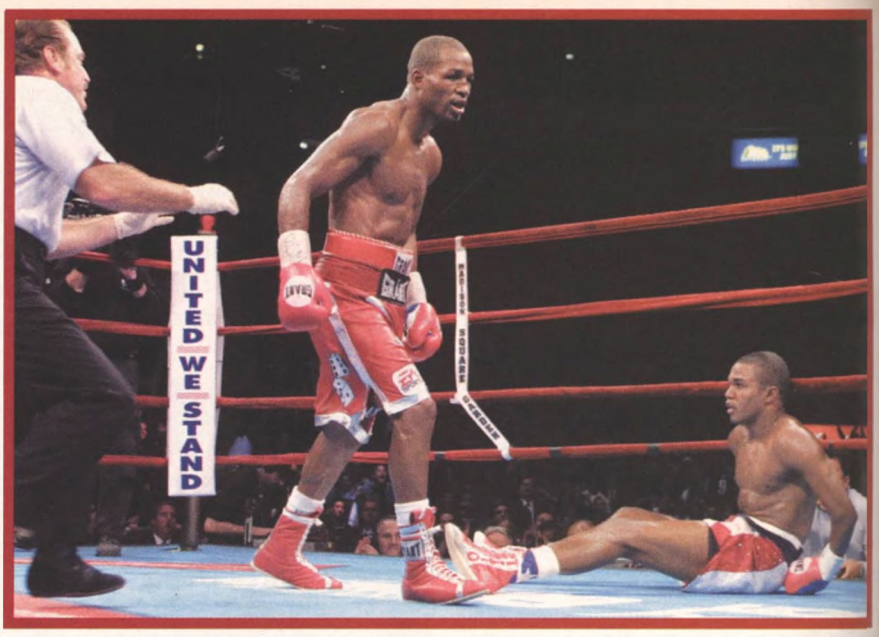
"Memphis could have been this generation's Lewiston, Maine," said Taffet, referring to the second Clay-Liston fight, "but turned out to be more like this generation's Kinshasa, Zaire."

While Lewis-Tyson was far more one-sided than "The Rumble In The Jungle," it did set a new financial standard by which future heavyweight title fights will be measured. The numbers were still trickling in as we went to press, but nobody disputes that the PPV take was at least $103-million, the highest of all-time. Whether or not it was sold to more homes than the second Evander Holyfield-Tyson fight is a matter of conjecture. Holyfield-Tyson II was televised by SET, Showtime's PPV arm, so Taffet doesn't have the exact figures, but most sources agree that "The Bite Fight" was sold to just under two million homes. And even if you take the most conservative number for Lewis-Tyson (1.8 million buys), the gross was larger because Holyfield-Tyson II cost consumers $49.95, as compared to $54.95 for Lewis-Tyson.

The Lewis-Tyson fight also broke new ground in that arch-rivals HBO and Showtime worked together in an unprecedented way. The fight wouldn't have happened if these two corporate giants hadn't called a mutually beneficial truce, but Taffet doesn't see such cooperation as the wave of the future.

"Lewis-Tyson was a very unique set of circumstances that I believe belonged to Lewis and Tyson solely. There was no blueprint [for working together on a regular basis], just a temporary working relationship."

Whether or not Lewis-Tyson represents



The success of the middleweight world championship series, in which Bernard Hopkins unified the 160-pound title against Felix Trinidad (pictured), has HBO looking at a further series between the current crop of outstanding fighters between 147 and 175 pounds.

TOP 10 PAY-PER-VIEW FIGHTS

Fight	Date	Sales (in millions)
Holyfield-Tyson II	June 1997	1.99
Lewis-Tyson	June 2002	1.80
Holyfield-Tyson I	November 1996	1.59
Tyson-McNeeley	August 1995	1.55
Holyfield-Foreman	April 1991	1.40
Tyson-Bruno II	March 1996	1.37
Trinidad-De La Hoya	September 1999	1.25
Tyson-Ruddock II	June 1991	1.25
Holyfield-Lewis I	March 1999	1.20
Holyfield-Douglas	October 1990	1.06

the zenith of PPV boxing remains to be seen. Taffet, however, is upbeat about the future.

"Right now we have seven fighters outside of the heavyweight division who have the potential to make some of the best matchups in the history of the sport: Oscar De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad [Taffet said this prior to Trinidad's surprising retirement announcement], Fernando Vargas, Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, Vernon Forrest, and Roy Jones. I believe there are combinations of fights that can be made. We've never had seven men so close in weight that can make such historic fights together.

"In large part, the middleweight world championship series is what spawned the idea that this can work. It really motivated us to look to a series of fights like that, where it doesn't really matter who wins or who loses. It just matters that these fighters keep fighting one another and delivering great fights."

Happily for boxing, Taffet is more than just a corporate numbers cruncher. He's not only become a fight fan during his years with HBO, but has also developed a sensibility about the Sweet Science that has been invaluable when it comes to knowing the kind of fighters people want to see.

"It begins with their boxing ability, because that's the entree, but beyond that they have to be able to touch people. It can be zany antics, controversy, personality, sex appeal, any number of factors. But in this business, if you touch people, they want to see you."

And what about the future? Is there any other match that could possibly generate so much money and interest as Lewis-Tyson?

"I've been through so many peaks and valleys in this business since 1991, that I never take a short-term view," said Taffet. "I measure this business in multi-year cycles. You're always one fight or one fighter away from a franchise, from a great night, from an event that lifts the sport for years to follow. I really believe Lewis-Tyson will be jet fuel for the sport of boxing. Big fights will be made. Fighters will come forward and will take risks with higher-caliber opponents because they saw the world stage that Lewis-Tyson created. It's not just about the amount of money, but the glory that goes to the athletes participating in an event like that."

You can bet a year's worth of cable bills that nobody ever felt that passionate about frozen peas. ■

Lennox Lewis' knockout of Mike Tyson grossed more money than any fight in history. Taffet feels the tremendous success will prove a stimulant to both the boxing and PPV industries.

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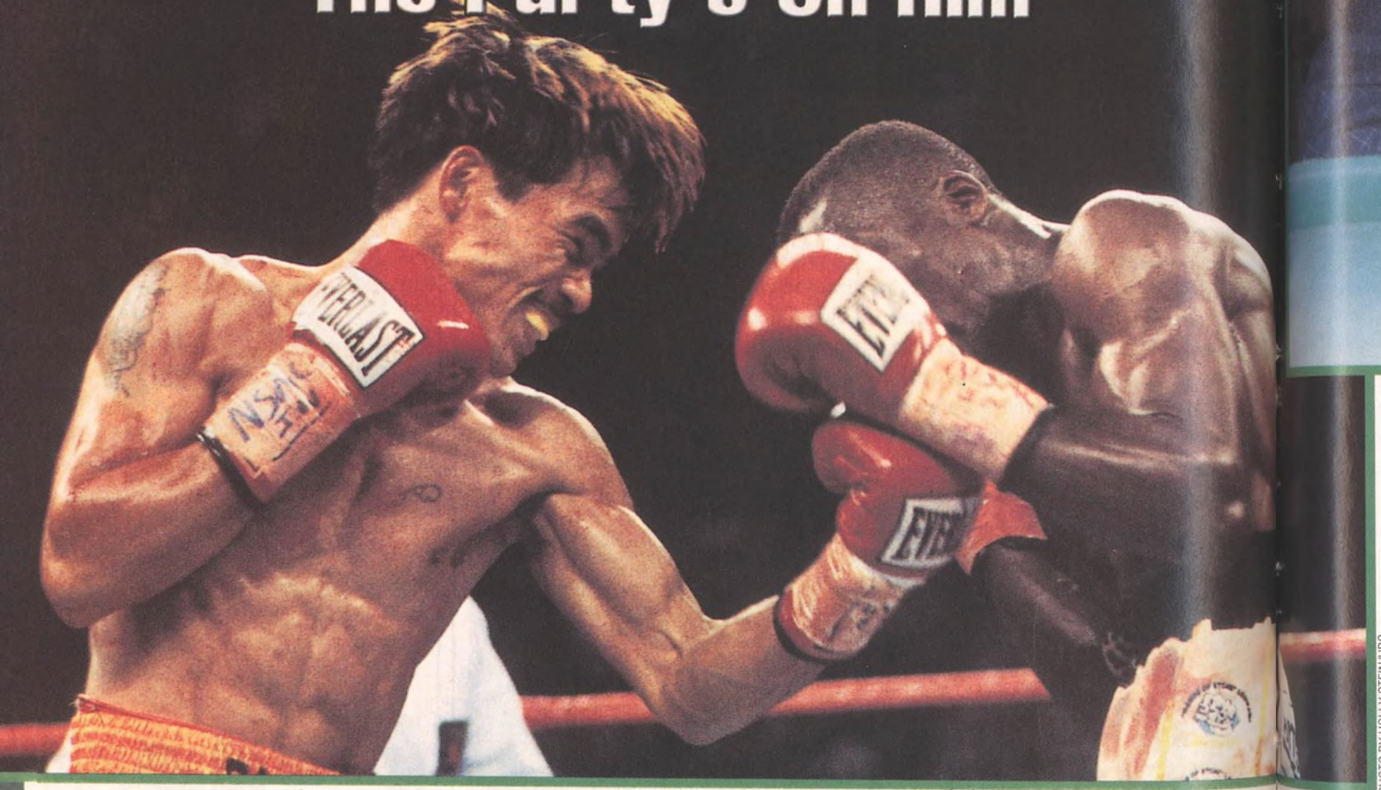


PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Whether he's ripping into opponents or playing pool, Pacquiao holds nothing back. Knocking out highly respected Lehlo Ledwaba on HBO pay-per-view to win the IBF junior featherweight belt (left) earned the Filipino fighter a lot of new fans in the United States.

By Ted Lerner

Manny Pacquiao is excited and he's in the zone. The IBF junior featherweight titleholder eyes his next shot like a hungry hawk circling its prey. He moves with the authority of a master, clearly in his rhythm and super confident. He sees the mark, bends over, calibrates the angle, and fires a straight left. *Bingo!* Another ball goes into the pocket and the cue ball is set up perfectly for the next shot.

This is Pacquiao at play, relaxing in the swank Rock 'n Roll pool hall in Manila's trendy Malate district, several weeks after his second-round destruction of Jorge Eliecer Julio on the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson pay-per-view card. Well, using the word "relaxing" might be stretching it a bit. When it comes to pool, Pacquiao's dead serious—and darn good. When he's not preparing for a fight, he can almost always be found playing pool, and always with money on the line.

With his small entourage of friends and a few hangers-on, Pacquiao is clearly in his element. He likes to enjoy himself with friends, sip an occasional cold beer, and step out on the town. Manila's his playground and, with a pocket full of dough, the party's on him.

"I just made a lot of money," Pacquiao said between games, flashing his trademark boyish grin as he spoke. "Money is not important to me. What's important to me is my friends. I'm happy with my friends. I don't like to be alone."

Without a doubt, though, money clearly comes in a very close second. The night THE RING visited, Pacquiao played pool for nearly eight hours, finishing up at dawn's light. He walked home with $2,000 in winnings in his jeans.

Obviously life is good for Pacquiao right now, and he's living it to the hilt. His stock in the United States is rising fast, thanks to his hard-hitting, go-for-broke style, and various promoters are clamoring to get a piece of him.

At home in Manila, where Pacquiao has been popular for several years, his latest victory on the richest fight card in history has sent his celebrity status over the top. Fans besiege him for autographs, and virtually every day reporters from local television, radio, and print come calling. He's made two popular action movies, for which he received $20,000 each (a princely sum by local standards), and has a third film lined up. Even the president and the Philippine senate have asked him to drop by.

The 23-year-old Pacquiao is right where he wants to be—in the limelight. He likes its warm glow and seeks it out.

"He's flashy," said Nick Giongco, a local boxing writer who has covered Pacquiao for the Manila daily *Today* since the start of his career. "When he got cut with a headbutt against Agapito Sanchez, he wiped his gloves, saw blood, and then licked his own blood. He doesn't lose his cool. He plays it straight. There's a swagger to Manny Pacquiao."

It's a swagger that's born out of a natural confidence, the joy of doing something he truly likes and having a stage on which to show it all off. Indeed, Pacquiao's entrances into the ring say it all. Laughing and waving to the crowd, he looks totally relaxed, like a kid being let out to play after dinner.

"When I fight, I'm never nervous," Pacquiao said. "I feel excited to fight, to put on a good show. It's fun. Maybe my opponent gets nervous when he sees that."

Yes, for Pacquiao it's all about having fun, whether in or out of the ring. But anyone who thinks that the good life will lead to Pacquiao's downfall doesn't really understand him.

"He spends his money like there's no tomorrow," said Giongco. "He's got lots of hangers-on. When he's got money, he's the man. And he hands it out. He thinks it's going to last a long time. In Manila, he's got the lifestyle. He loves to party. But when it comes time to step up, he really trains. What's dangerous is his drive to excel, his motivation."

"When he trains, he really enjoys training," said Pacquiao's business manager, Rod Nazario. "But outside of training, he really enjoys himself. But I have no problems with him."

Pacquiao's personality was forged in the destitute backwater where he grew up. The second of four children, he was raised in the uplands surrounding General Santos City, a coastal town on the large and often troubled southern Philippine island of Mindanao. His father eked out a subsistence living, raising corn and bananas. In the Philippines, that's a sure recipe for being poor as dirt. Pacquiao, however, never recalled a moment in his childhood when his family life wasn't happy.

By all accounts he was a good, polite kid who never got into trouble. He put some pesos in his pocket by working various jobs in his early teens, including waiting tables and selling bread. His interest in boxing came from hanging out with his uncle.

"My uncle always liked watching boxing," Pacquiao said. "One time he bought two pairs of boxing gloves. Every afternoon, me and my friends would fight."

Pacquiao enjoyed the friendly scraps, and when he was 12 years old he started competing in boxing competitions held in the town square of General Santos.

He quit high school at age 15, after his first year, and, along with several friends, took the 400-mile, two-day boat journey to Manila with one goal in mind—to become a professional boxer. His first stop was the

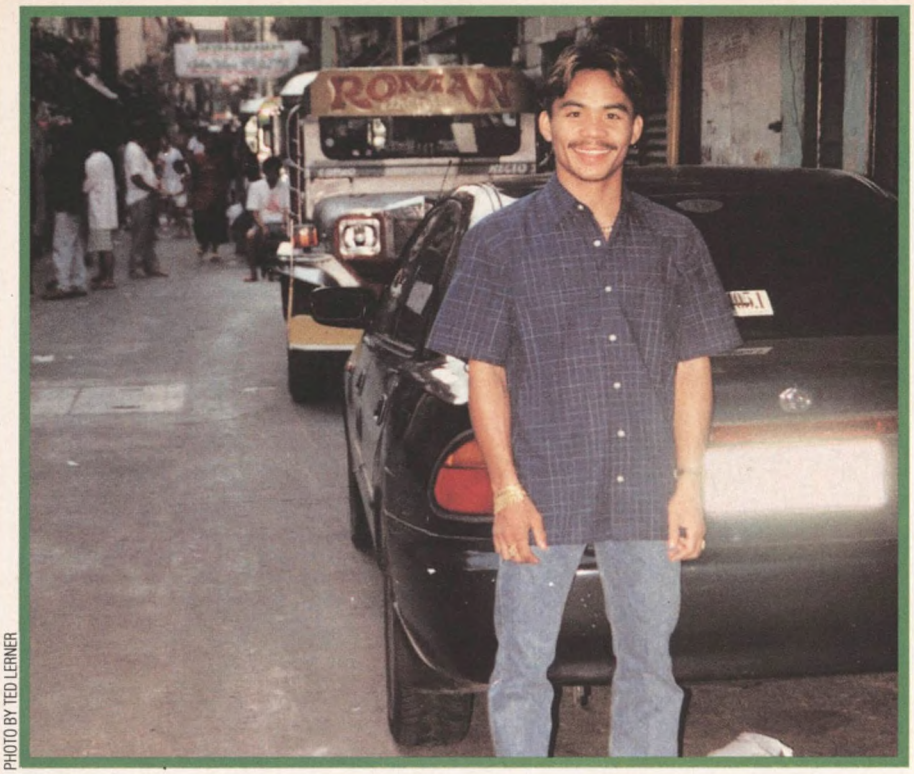


PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Pacquiao flashes his infectious smile for the camera while posing outside of the L&M Gym in Manila. Although the gym is in a seedy part of town, the fighter feels safer there than in his hometown of General Santos City, where he needs bodyguards to protect him.

well-known L&M Gym, a dingy hole in the wall situated in the heart of Manila's teeming squalor. He walked into the tiny office and said to the bespectacled man behind the desk, "I want to be a boxer."

"I told him, 'You go home and stay with your mom.' He was too young and only weighed 104 pounds," recalled Nazario.

Although he was sent on his way, Pacquiao knew what he wanted and he wouldn't be swayed. He stayed with relatives in a shabby part of town and found work on a construction site. He bounced around to various gyms in town and learned the craft.

In 1995, Pacquiao turned professional. Many of his early fights were shown on a nationally televised weekly fight show called *Blow By Blow*. His let-it-all-hang-out style fit the Filipino tastes perfectly and quickly won him a following.

"He was colorful, a bell-to-bell fighter," said Giongco. "He never cared what the opponent had to offer. His attitude has always been, 'I don't care if I get hit.'"

"In the first round, I want to hit my opponent hard," said Pacquiao, explaining his approach to boxing. "I want to knock them out in three or four rounds."

While all-action sluggers are common in the Philippines, Pacquiao always had something more, a certain quality that Filipinos just can't get enough of. Call it swagger, charisma, or show biz. Whatever you call it, Pacquiao exudes a spirit in the ring that's infectious.

"Manny really enjoys boxing," said Nazario. "He's not like other boxers. It's as if he's playing basketball. He doesn't care about getting hit. You cannot intimidate him."

Pacquiao's fan appeal got him off to a fast start as a pro. He won the Philippine title and the Orient title. Then in December of 1998, when he was still only 19 years old, Pacquiao traveled to Thailand and challenged WBC flyweight titleholder Chatchai Sasakul. Pacquiao was way behind on the scorecards after seven rounds, but exploded in the eighth, putting Chatchai down for the 10-count with a left hook to the chin.

He made one successful defense, stopping Gabriel Mira in Manila, but by the summer of '99, Pacquiao was having trouble making weight. He went back to Thailand for a title defense against Medgoen Lukchaopormasak and lost the belt on the scales. The fight went ahead anyway, and a dispirited Pacquiao lost via third-round knockout.

Afterward, Pacquiao immediately jumped up 10 pounds to junior feather, and for the next year-and-a-half, kept busy fighting in the Philippines. He tore through everyone placed in front of him, knocking out six opponents in a row.

In June of 2001, Pacquiao's managers took him to the U.S. with nothing more than plans to hunt for a fight. In the meantime, they started scouting gyms. After looking around the San Francisco area, the group

In his most recent fight, Pacquiao stopped former bantamweight titlist Jorge Eliecer Julio on the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson card in Memphis. His growing popularity has led to a managerial conflict that could possibly hamper Pacquiao's career.

Manny the movie star: Pacquiao is so popular in the Philippines that he has starred in two action movies (earning $20,000 for each) and is scheduled to make a third.

headed south and wound up at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, where Pacquiao had a brief tryout with Roach on the mitts.

"Manny came over to me and said, 'Boss, he's good,'" recalled Nazario. "In Manila, he never listens to any trainer. With Freddie Roach, he has full respect. And Freddie seems to like him."

"Freddie's a god to Manny," said Giongco.

The relationship has obviously worked. Everyone involved has noticed some key changes in Pacquiao, giving Roach credit for helping mold him into a more complete fighter.

"He taught me about head movement, defense, and footwork," said Pacquiao. "He works hard, and he likes me because I'm a hard worker."

"Before, when you let him loose," said Nazario, "all he knows is fighting like a cat. But now he moves his head well, his arms are up for protection, even his stomach is developed."

The payoff was almost immediate, as Pacquiao smoked highly touted Lehlo Ledwaba in June '01 to win the IBF 122-pound crown. Pacquiao was a last-minute replacement, and during the prefight buildup, nobody paid him any mind, nor could they pronounce his name correctly. But after his rousing sixth-round TKO victory, Pacquiao suddenly had a lot of new fans. Many of them still didn't know how to correctly pronounce his name, but that didn't matter. They preferred to call him "Pac-Man," anyway, after the voracious video game character.

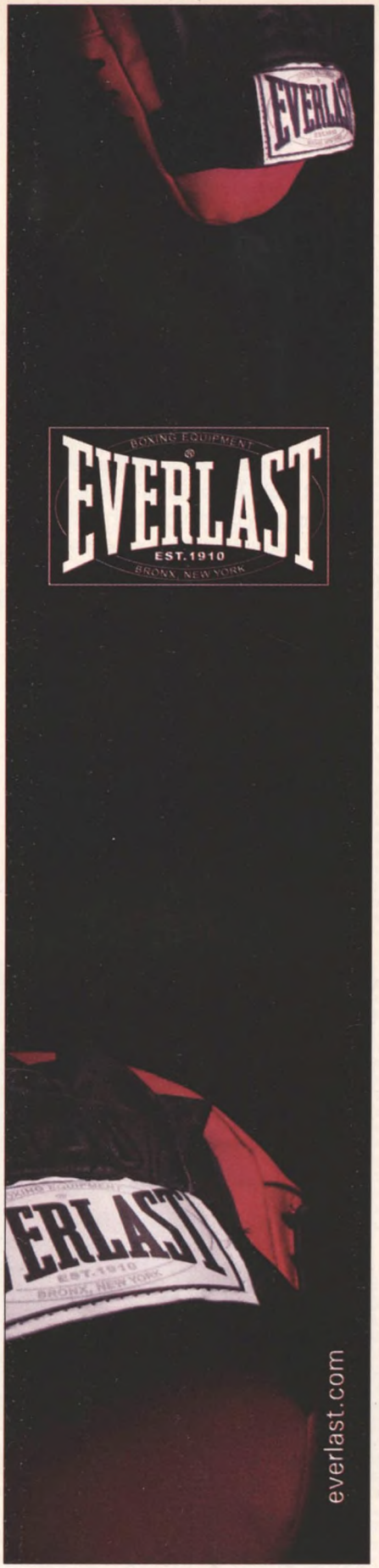
Pacquiao's visits to the U.S. have been lessons in discipline and hard work. His several stints in California have averaged about six weeks, all of it focused strictly on boxing. That's by the design of his managers, who make sure his high-flying Manila lifestyle gets left behind. In Hollywood, Pacquiao shares a no-frills apartment in a seedy area of town with fellow Filipino and former WBC super flyweight titleholder Gerry Penalosa, who has followed Pacquiao's lead and hooked up with Roach.

"He knows where to go in Manila," said Nazario. "People always want to borrow money. Somebody's sick. There are so many problems here. I cannot watch him 24 hours a day. In L.A., we don't give him a car. We don't tell him where to go or what to do. We don't give him enough money to have a good time."

"My life in the U.S. is like a prison," agreed Pacquiao, still smiling.

While everything has come together for Pacquiao over the last year-and-a-half, there are some ominous clouds on the horizon that could dim his bright prospects. His managerial situation in Manila has become a complete mess, especially since his victory over Julio.

(Continued on page 44)



Manny Pacquiao

(Continued from page 43)

Pacquiao's actual manager, Marty Elorde, one of the sons of the late Hall of Fame junior lightweight Flash Elorde, has been at odds with Nazario, the business manager. Elorde recently had to turn down a juicy $2.5-million offer for Pacquiao from American promoter Lou DiBella because Nazario, according to Elorde, made a commitment with promoter Murad Muhammed to handle Pacquiao's future fights without consulting Elorde.

Pacquiao, 34-2-1 (25), has indicated that he wants to rescind his contract with Elorde and start fresh. The problem appears headed for a long, ugly court battle and could clearly affect Pacquiao's career. Pacquiao, with typical youthful fervor, doesn't seem to think it's too big of a problem.

"I want to think positive that everything will work out," he said.

Like his managerial problems, Pacquiao's next defense is still up in the air, but there are indications he will fight again some time in the early-fall. Mention a possible showdown with junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala, and Pacquiao licks his lips.

"He's a good boxer," he said. "But he's small. He can't jab me."

Pacquiao said he's ready to take on anyone, anywhere, even if he has to move up in weight. Bones Adams, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, Johnny Tapia, Naseem Hamed. It doesn't matter.

American Freddie Roach has trained Pacquiao for his last three fights and is credited with helping develop "Pac-Man" into a more complete fighter. That's fellow Filipino Gerry Penalosa on the left, who is now also working with the highly respected Roach.

"I'll fight anybody," he said. "I believe I'm the strongest super bantam and featherweight in the world."

In the meantime, Pacquiao divides his time between his home in General Santos and his apartment in Manila. He bought a four-acre mango farm for his parents, his wife, and their two young sons in General Santos. When in the city of his birth, he also attends to his Manny Pacquiao Foundation, which provides help to street children, retired boxers, and offers scholarships for the poor.

Pacquiao often comes to Manila for the action and for his personal safety. He claims he was recently threatened by one of the criminal gangs that are so endemic in his home province. According to Pacquiao, armed men came to his house with the intention of kidnapping him. Luckily, Pacquiao wasn't home, but this sort of danger is the reason he keeps four bodyguards in General Santos.

"It's a crazy place," he said.

While Pacquiao is in big demand in Manila, and the high life keeps calling, he never neglects what's important. He still finds time to do his daily roadwork and always heads over to the L&M Gym for training. For him it's all fun. Whether training for a title fight, or playing pool with his buddies, success for Manny Pacquiao means putting his heart into everything he does.

"I don't think about the money," he said. "It's the accomplishment. I want to be the best boxer in the world. I want to be a big name in the U.S. I want to be the first Asian boxer to win three titles in three different weight classes. I do not back down. If I get hit, I'll step back for only a second. Then I come right back. I will not stop fighting." ■

Ted Lerner is a freelance writer based in the Philippines and an occasional contributor to this magazine.

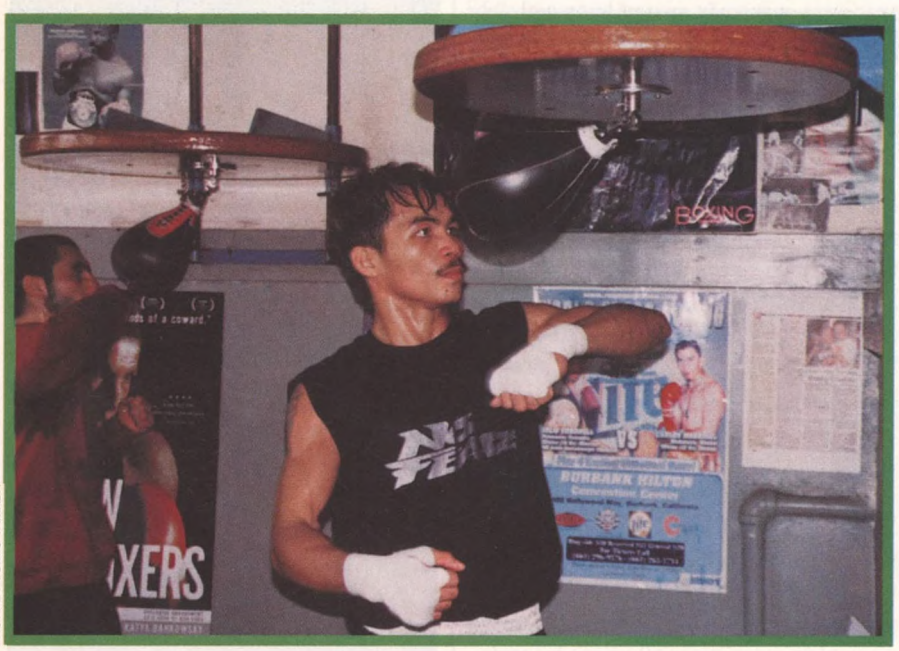


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Despite loving to party, Pacquiao, pictured hitting the speedbag at Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, always finds time to train hard. Having worn belts at both 112 and 122 pounds, he wants to become the first Asian boxer to win titles in three weight divisions.

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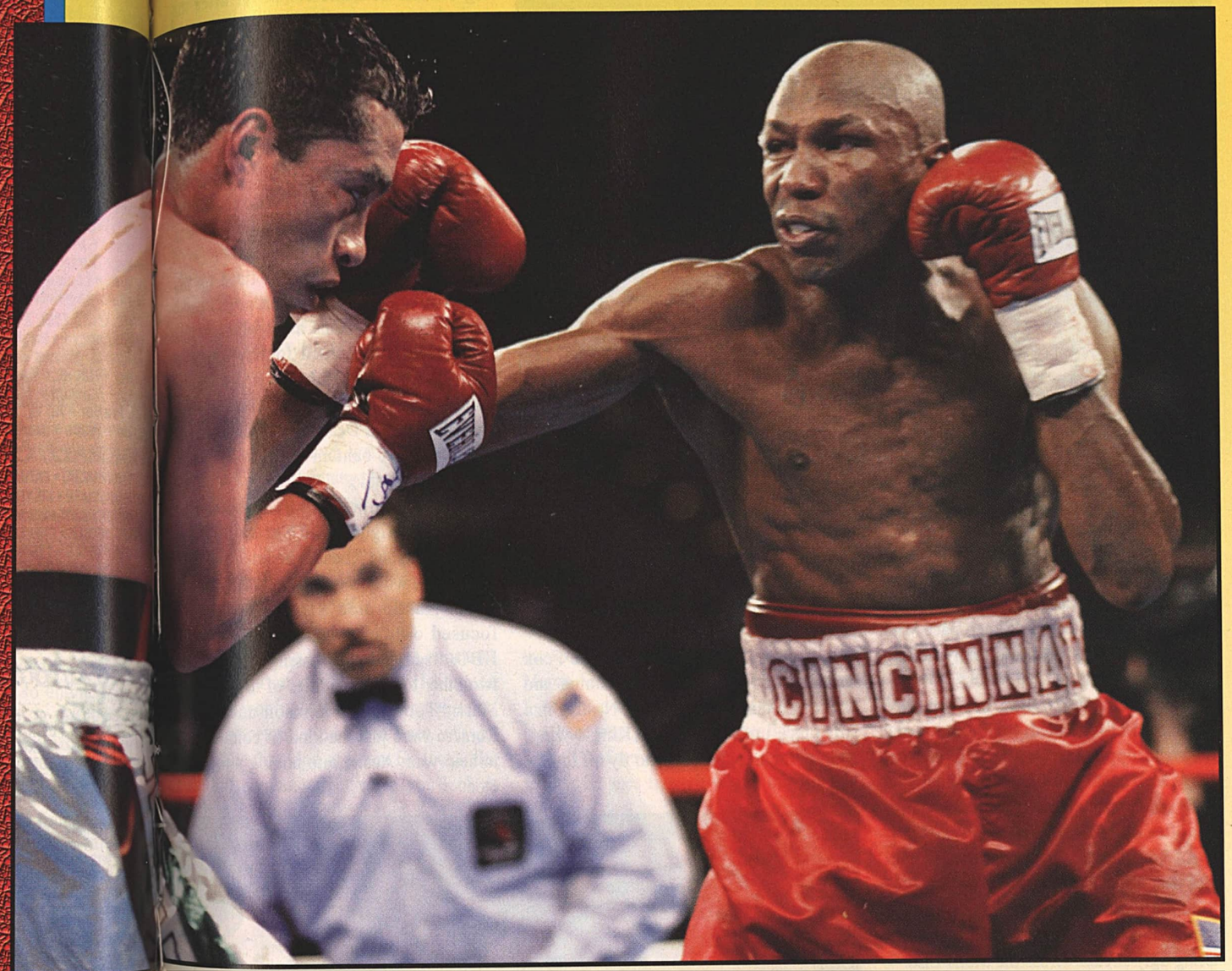
WHAT DRIVES TIM AUSTIN?

Superstardom Is Still His Destination



Austin reminded everybody of what a special fighter he is with an aesthetically pleasing 10th-round TKO of Adan Vargas. The hard-fought contest stole the show away from the disappointing heavyweight main event, featuring John Ruiz and Kirk Johnson.

By Ted Bodenrader

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

The agreement was simple. It required no contracts and no signatures. All John Ruiz had to do was knock Kirk Johnson out, and he'd get a shiny, new Mercedes to put in his garage.

For WBA heavyweight titleholder Ruiz, promoter Don King's perky incentive would be the drive that kept him alive during a month of senseless prefight jibber. But two hours before Ruiz and Johnson engaged in the kind of wreck more fitting for the Indy 500, a bantamweight titleholder was revving quietly in his dressing room.

Tim Austin didn't need to be wooed with some fancy wheels to get him charged up for the night's events at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. King's luxurious four-wheel carrot was reserved solely for Ruiz.

But as Austin reflected on a pro career that began nearly a decade ago, and the 25-fight unbeaten mark that accompanied it, he and his handlers jointly came to a foregone conclusion. It was time to make a move. Therefore, the 31-year-old Austin careened into the ring as if he knew his career was in dire need of a jumpstart.

No sooner had Austin dispatched Mexico's Adan Vargas that July night than the road ahead was being mapped out. Austin had been idling at 118 pounds for nearly 10 years now, a grand coupe just spinning his wheels in one of boxing's loneliest garages.

These thoughts were already drifting through the mind of trainer Aaron Snowell, aboard since Austin's fourth professional fight, as he wiped the perspiration off his fighter's bald head as if he were waxing down a luxury sedan. Perhaps it's time to put this bantamweight boredom in their rearview mirror and move this puppy on toward an Electric Avenue.

"I think we're beginning to realize that we may need to move up in weight to get the kind of recognition Tim deserves," Snowell said after Austin prevailed in the battle of lefties. "Tim's personal goal has long been to unify the bantamweight titles, but I don't know what good that will really do. People already know he's the best guy out there at 118 pounds."

And count Vargas among them. Once Austin waded through the cobwebs of inactivity the first few rounds, he began to display the kind of fistic artistry that deserves a wider audience.

After fighting off an early Vargas onslaught, Austin settled in to the kind of rhythmic dance that became increasingly easy on the eyes as the fight wore on. Slipping in and out, pelting smooth right-left combinations through Vargas' guard, the only thing missing was the classical music to accompany such gracefulness.

In this city of flash and trash, Austin was nothing of the sort. On this night, he was the Bellagio. He was the class of the town.

The end came at 1:03 of the 10th round, when a prolonged volley of headshots prompted referee Tony Weeks to rescue the brave but reeling Vargas, 37-4-1 (23), from further punishment. The Mexican

Vargas came to win and put up stubborn resistance. He frequently traded with the IBF bantamweight titleholder. But despite opening a cut over Austin's right eye, the Mexican challenger was gradually worn down by "The Cincinnati Kid's" harder punches.

challenger had fought well, landed his share of punches, and cut Austin over the right eye. But he couldn't keep pace with the IBF beltholder and was really getting tagged at the end.

"It was an outstanding performance against a well-schooled, highly motivated Mexican opponent," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "Austin got bloodied up a little and he dealt with it, as real champions often do."

An hour later, Johnson's low-blow tactics led to a Ruiz victory by way of hideous disqualification. Compared to Austin's masterpiece, it seemed like splattering ugly streaks across the Mona Lisa.

"The main event showed just how screwed up our priorities are when big guys get big money just because they're big," Merchant said. "There were a couple of big slugs in there who got five times the money that two sturdy bantamweights got for putting on an outstanding show."

Thankfully, the 6,000-plus on hand had the delight that preceded the plight to savor. It was then that Austin loomed as the show's savior, Don King's unsung hero who quietly walked off into the Vegas sunset with a modest paycheck in hand.

"Every time Tim fights on the undercard, it turns out that he should have been the main event," joked Snowell. "People were coming up to me after the fight and saying that we should have been the main attraction."

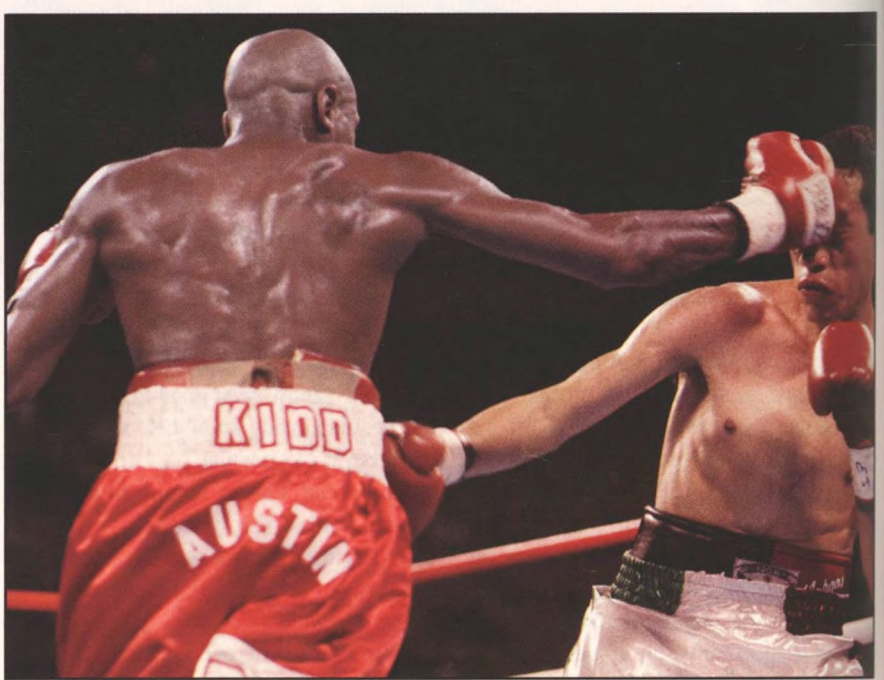
In a way, Austin is a bit like the Felix Trinidad of five years ago. Winning and waiting. Winning and waiting. Nesting in a soft place underneath Don King's wing, waiting for an opportunity to fly off to new heights.

After years of a steady monotony, dusting off one no-name contender after the next, Trinidad finally escaped the confines of obscurity and blossomed into one of the game's bona fide superstars. Beginning with a triumph over Oscar De La Hoya, it was a ride that accelerated with each passing megafight. David Reid, Fernando Vargas, and William Joppy went down one by one. By the time Trinidad moved all the way up to 160 pounds, "Tito Power" was in full force.

But each time Austin has fired up his competitive engines for a proposed coming-out bash, the plans have fallen to bits at his feet. King signed Johnny Tapia in 1998 in hopes of setting up a showdown with Austin. But as soon as Tapia defeated Nana Konadu in December of that year to win the WBA bantam belt, he vanished from King's stable.

"Tapia signed with King so he could get the Konadu fight," said Snowell. "Then after he whipped Konadu, he left King right away so he wouldn't have to fight Tim."

But Austin didn't fret. He just kept focused on winning. In the meantime, HBO discussed showcasing him against two other top commodities of the division. Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson and Danny Romero were just the kind of counterparts to help vault Austin into boxing's top echelon.



Austin's rapid-fire combinations were a major factor, and although he never floored his rival, he gave him a thorough beating, landing 319 blows, compared to 207 for Vargas, according to CompuBox. It was Austin's most impressive showing in several years.

"But as luck would have it," said Snowell, "Johnson gets beaten [by Rafael Marquez], and then Romero gets plucked out [by Ratanachai Vorapin], and we're right back at Square One."

"It's been frustrating, waiting for some of these opportunities to play out," admitted Austin. "But I've been patient. In this business, anything can happen, and it can happen overnight."

In the meantime, Snowell and Austin have spent countless days in their Ohio sweatshop, sharpening their skills for the day it finally does happen, maintaining "The Cincinnati Kid" as a primed and polished weapon. With savvy skills, a slick jab, and two-fisted power, he's the true Austin Powers.

For now, the duo is preparing for a proposed autumn brawl with Marquez, a rough and tough bantamweight who twice toppled the faded Johnson.

"Marquez is a real good challenge for Tim Austin," said Merchant. "If Austin wins that fight and looks impressive doing it, that would be a good platform for him to move up to 122 or 126 pounds.

"If he wants to become a true superstar in boxing, that's a move he'll have to make. He won't get that kind of recognition at bantamweight. And I don't see why he can't make that kind of jump. He looks like a natural bantamweight when you look at his frame, but guys like Paulie Ayala and Bones Adams moved up from that division, so I don't see why Tim Austin can't."

"Tim has the punching power right now that he could move up to 122 or 126 pounds," agreed Snowell. "We're not concerned about that. I just want it to be a situation that he puts on the extra weight in a way that it will benefit him, make him stronger and even more effective in there. In other words, I don't want to put on the pounds just for the sake of putting them on. Tim is very comfortable at bantamweight, but I don't think a few extra pounds would hurt him in any way."

While Austin himself seems tentative in abandoning his quest for undisputed bantamweight championship status, he readily admits that the names hovering above at 122 pounds have tantalized him for years.

Paulie Ayala, Bones Adams, Manny Pacquiao. He sometimes even dreams about featherweight fisticuffs. Naseem Hamed, Erik Morales, and one stone-faced Mexican in particular.

Austin consoles Vargas after retaining the IBF 118-pound belt for the ninth time. Now Austin is thinking about moving up to junior featherweight, maybe even feather, in search of meaningful bouts.

"I've closed my eyes in the past and thought about what it would be like fighting Marco Antonio Barrera," said Austin. "What I see in that fight is a whole lot of gun-slinging. I see guns going off all over the place."

And before Austin opens his eyes to reality, he sees himself taking out Barrera the same way he foiled Vargas. He sees a systematic dismantling of the featherweight champ, topped off by the same kind of chilling flurry that finished Vargas.

As is the case with many successful treks through this troubling game, Austin is motivated by factors beyond paychecks and championship belts. The fuel behind this jewel also has nothing to do with mansions, shiny Mercedes sedans, or even being the baddest man on the bantamweight block. What drives Austin is the very thing he embraced moments after he turned Vargas' world into a cocoon of hurt. There it was at the ring apron, sparkling like the victory champagne in which he would later indulge.

"My daughter is the sunshine of my life," Austin said of 11-year-old Tamika. "She always has been. She's the spirit that's kept me going from the beginning."

Yet, it wasn't until Austin's sixth-round drubbing of Steve Dotse in June 2001 that Austin decided to take his little girl to work with him. Prior to that, Austin felt it was too early for Tamika to digest the fact that Daddy breaks noses for a living.

"She's been asking and asking and asking for me to let her come to a fight," said Austin. "I wouldn't let her come because this is a tough business. Last year, I finally gave in. She's come to two of my fights now, and she loved them both. Now that I see she can handle the situation, she can come whenever she wants to."

If all goes according to the Austin game plan, that could mean five more years of father-daughter fight excursions. And Austin couldn't find a more fitting passenger to take along for the ride ahead. The question remains, however, as to where this ride will be taking them. Will Austin continue to sputter along Route 118? Or will he forever put the bantamweight division behind him in favor of a far more lucrative destination?

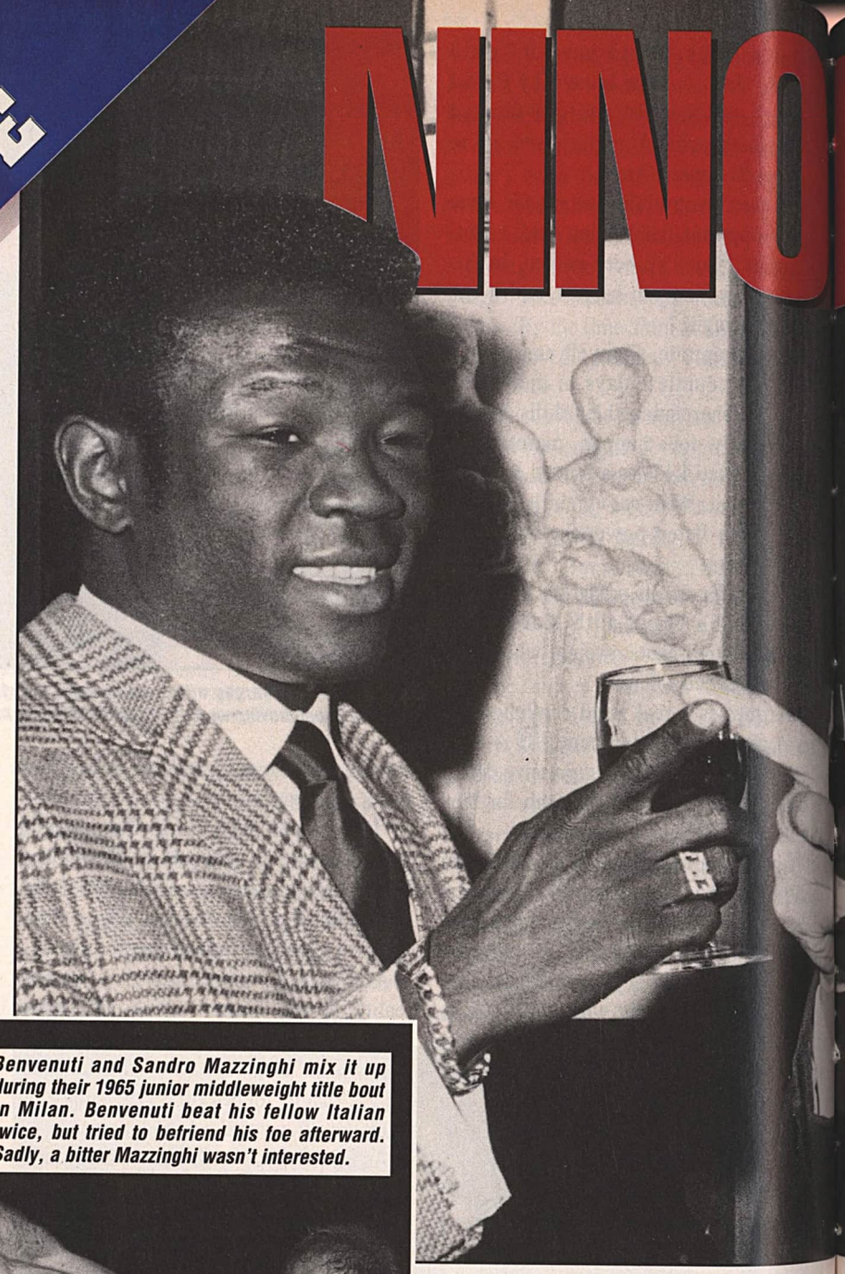
While John Ruiz continues to barrel down the road in his modest Ford Explorer—not the new Mercedes he had hoped for—Austin is just about ready to put the pedal to the metal.

"I have five years to make some noise in boxing," Austin said. "It's time for me to go places." ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelance writer based in the Boston area and a regular contributor to this magazine.

NINO BENVENUTI:

"When A Fight Is Beautiful, I Love It"



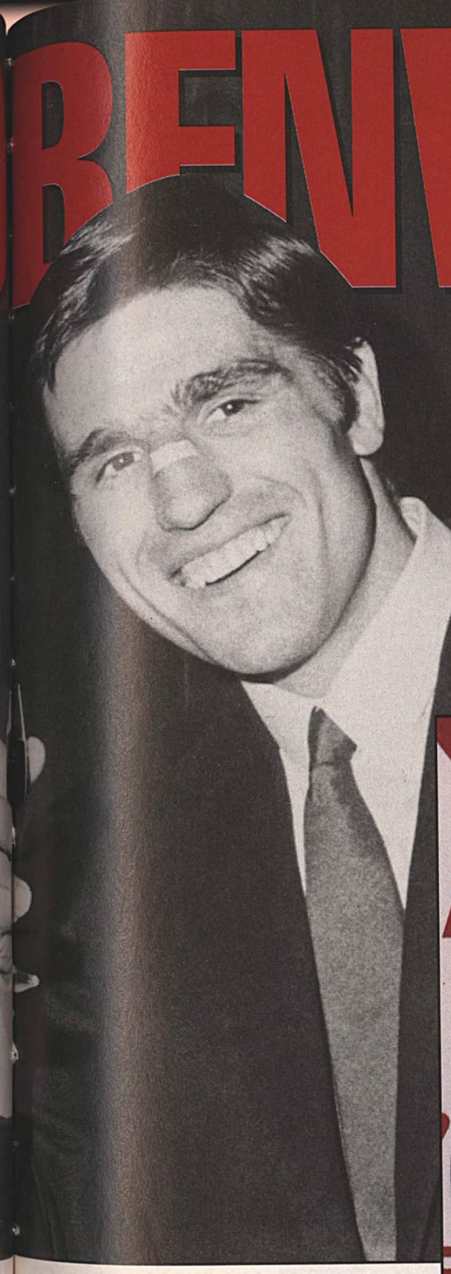


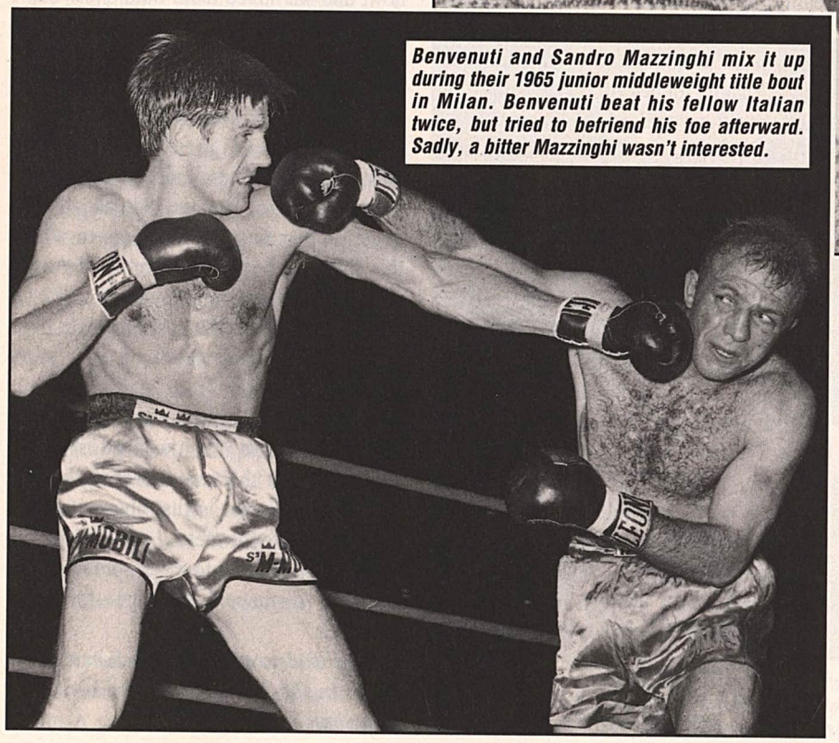
PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Then and now: Emile Griffith and Benvenuti share a toast the day after Nino took the middleweight title away from Emile in 1967 (left). They fought three times in all, and were reunited at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June (above).

By Robert Cassidy

Nino Benvenuti doesn't like to talk about boxing as much as he likes to talk about boxers. In Italy he is boxing royalty, yet he speaks of his fellow fighters with the reverence of an awestruck fan.

Benvenuti's respect for the men who practice the Sweet Science runs deep. He has made many friends in the sport, including opponents with whom he engaged in his toughest fights. Emile Griffith is the godfather to one of Benvenuti's children, and Carlos Monzon found a loyal friend in Benvenuti when much of society turned its back on him.



Benvenuti and Sandro Mazzinghi mix it up during their 1965 junior middleweight title bout in Milan. Benvenuti beat his fellow Italian twice, but tried to befriend his foe afterward. Sadly, a bitter Mazzinghi wasn't interested.

"I understand fighters," said Benvenuti. "It doesn't matter what we did in the ring. When it's over, it's over. Then we are friends."

There is one man, however, who is not willing to accept Benvenuti's friendship, and that perplexes the two-division former champ. In 1965, Benvenuti stopped fellow countryman Sandro Mazzinghi in six rounds to win the junior middleweight title. They fought again six months later and Benvenuti won a 15-round decision. After that fight, Benvenuti attempted to visit Mazzinghi and establish a friendship.

"He is a friend of mine, but I am not a friend of his," said Benvenuti. "He's always angry with me. I don't know why. Maybe because I punched him. But he punched me, too. I tried to go to his house and I said, 'I want to be your friend.' But he refused. He said, 'What are you doing here? Why are you here?' He was bitter. But I am sorry he feels that way. Carlos Monzon beat me, but he was my big, big friend."

Mazzinghi aside, it seems difficult not to like Benvenuti. In June he attended the 2002 International Boxing Hall of Fame induction ceremonies in Canastota, New York. A family emergency prevented Benvenuti from attending his own induction in 1992, so this marked his first visit to Canastota.

"It feels great to be here with all the big champions around me," he said. "It is really an honor for me to be here."

The spectacle that surrounded Benvenuti in Canastota made his eyes sparkle with happiness. Throughout the weekend, he was routinely applauded by fans and at times seemed overwhelmed by the attention paid to him. He went through it all with a smile, even when bridging the language barrier between him and the English-speaking media. Thankfully, the IBHOF provided two interpreters—Gina Patrea and Sal Murgia—to translate for THE RING.

There is a touch of gray in Benvenuti's hair, but that is the only sign that he is 64 years old and no longer a world-class middleweight. He is trim and appears to be in

A touch of the old world: Benvenuti poses on the terrace of a building in Bologna, Italy, prior to coming to the United States for his first fight with Griffith.

excellent shape. When asked if he still works out, Benvenuti laughed.

"No, I'm lucky," he said. "I have the right balance. I had perfect parents with the right genes. That keeps me in shape."

Benvenuti was born in Trieste, Italy, and remains one of his country's most popular athletes. Today he lives in Rome with his wife Nadi. He has six grown children.

Benvenuti's ascent in boxing began in 1960 when he won a gold medal at the summer Olympics in Rome.

"To win the gold medal in my own country was one of the most beautiful things to ever happen to me," he said. "To win in Italy, for Italy, I was so proud."

Five years later, Benvenuti won his first professional title by defeating Mazzinghi. He would lose the 154-pound title in 1966, dropping a disputed decision to Ki Soo Kim in Seoul, South Korea. The Olympic rematch was only Benvenuti's second pro fight outside of Italy. Kim had lost a 5-0 decision to Benvenuti in the third round of the 1960 Games.

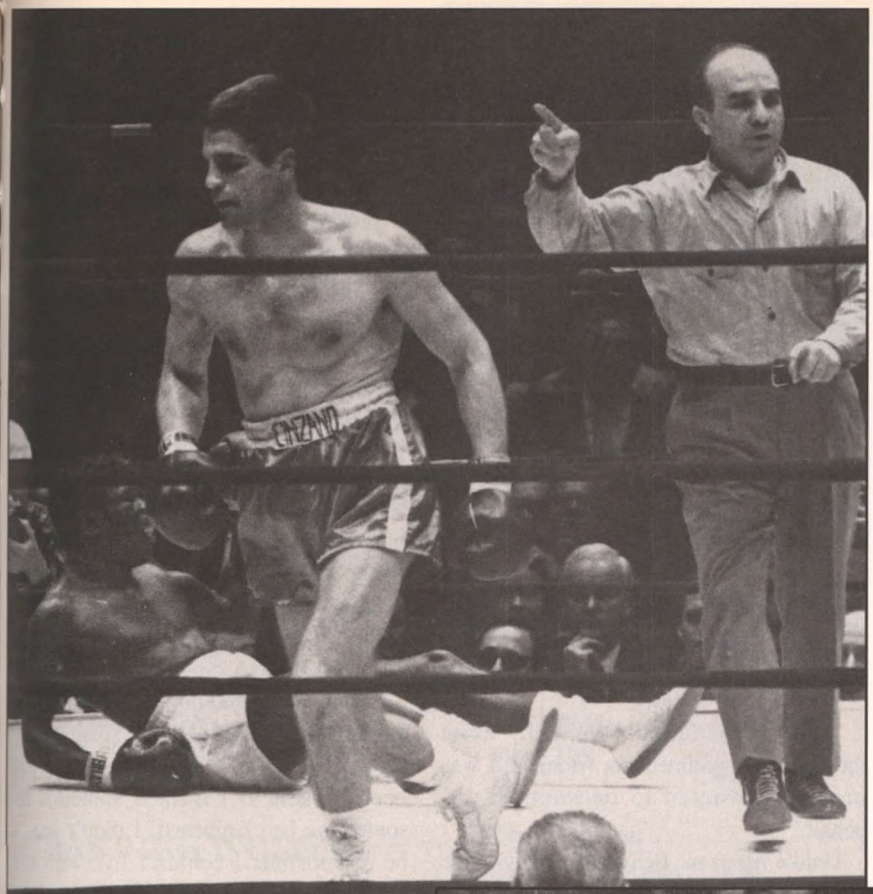
It wasn't until he challenged fellow Hall of Famer Griffith for the middleweight crown in 1967 that his popularity and stature as a champion began to rise outside of Italy. Although Benvenuti had impressive credentials, before meeting Griffith he was dismissed as a European fighter with odd training habits. Benvenuti supplemented boxing workouts by swimming, climbing trees, and playing tennis. And until he came to America, he sparred and boxed without a mouthpiece.

"I was astounded that he didn't have a mouthpiece," said Dr. Vincent Savino, a New York City dentist who made mouthpieces for many top fighters of that era and made Benvenuti's first mouthpiece. "I was a guest at his training camp for the second Griffith fight, and I offered to make him one. He told me he never had a mouthpiece, but he said using one sounded like a good idea."

It was difficult to categorize Benvenuti's style, which made him more of an enigma. He wasn't a devastating puncher nor was he a stylish boxer. His greatest asset may have been his belief in himself.

"I went to Italy with Teddy Brenner to scout him," said trainer Gil Clancy, who eventually opposed Benvenuti five times, thrice with Griffith and twice with Tom "The Bomb" Bethea. "After the fight, we called back to Harry Markson at the Garden and he asked, 'What chance does he have to beat Griffith?' Teddy said, 'Slim and none.' Suffice it to say, Benvenuti was very underrated. But he was very confident in himself and believed in his ability to win. He was a strong-willed fighter."

Benvenuti was a 5-2 underdog the first time he challenged Griffith, which was the last title fight at the old Madison Square Garden at West 49th Street. But he over-



Referee Johnny LoBianco directs Benvenuti to a neutral corner after the Italian scored a knockdown in the ninth round of his third fight with Griffith. All three bouts were close, with Benvenuti winning the first and the third.

came a knockdown to win a unanimous decision and the middleweight title. Their second bout was at Shea Stadium, in Flushing, New York, and Griffith regained the title with a majority decision. Unknown to most was the fact that Benvenuti fought that fight after Bennie Briscoe had broken one of his ribs in sparring. The third Griffith bout opened the new Madison Square Garden, and Benvenuti regained the title via unanimous decision.

"Emile was a very big champion," said Benvenuti. "But I had my best moments with him. If we fought earlier in my life or later in my life, maybe I wouldn't have won. I fought Emile at the perfect time for me. I was in perfect shape."

"Nino is a beautiful person and a great champion," said Griffith, who was reunited with his old nemesis in Canastota. "It is so wonderful to see him. We had three fights and they were all close. Maybe I won them; maybe he won them. The most important thing is that we are still good friends."

Benvenuti would successfully defend the middleweight crown against Don Fullmer (W 15), Fraser Scott (W Disq. 7), Luis Rodriguez (KO 11), and Bethea (KO 8) before Monzon ended his reign with a 12th-round knockout in 1970. In a rematch with Monzon six months later, Benvenuti was stopped in the third round.

"After the second fight with Monzon, I thought about what to do and I said, 'No more,'" said Benvenuti. "The next day I said the same thing at a press conference. I was finished with boxing. Someone said, 'Ah, everybody says this.' I know everybody says that, but not me. When I give my word, it's my word."

One year later, an Italian businessman put up a million dollars to bankroll a comeback. Benvenuti turned it down. He would not, however, turn his back on the

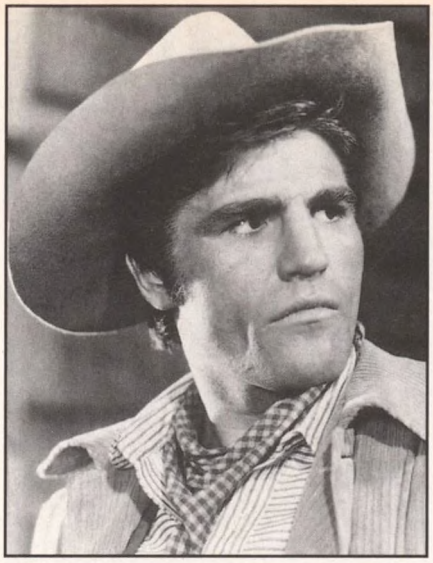
Benvenuti beat a number of future Hall of Famers during his distinguished career, including Luis Rodriguez, who was counted out in the 11th round of their 1969 middleweight title bout in Rome.

friendships he made in boxing. The bond between Benvenuti and Monzon grew stronger when the Argentine champion was convicted of killing his girlfriend in 1988. Benvenuti made an annual trip to Argentina to visit Monzon in prison.

"It was very, very sad to see him like that," said Benvenuti. "Monzon was born in a particular place, like the wild lands. He grew in the community and in the world, but he would always be different. He didn't know what to do with success. He didn't handle it. It was hard for him."

Benvenuti understood that the instincts and aggression that made Monzon a great fighter were the very characteristics that made it difficult for him to assimilate into society. During their prison visits, Benvenuti attempted to build Monzon's confidence, reminding him how far he had come in life. He believed a man like Monzon, who had the strength to overcome a life born into poverty, could overcome anything. Sadly, Monzon never got the chance. In 1995, Monzon died in an auto accident while returning to prison after a weekend furlough.

While speaking of Monzon's death, Benvenuti's mood deflated.



In 1970, Benvenuti made his movie debut in a spaghetti western called* Alive Or Preferably Dead. *Today, he's still in front of the cameras, working as a sports broadcaster for the national Italian TV and radio network.

"I was at his funeral," he said. "When they built a monument for Monzon, I was present. I wanted to be there on his behalf."

Unlike Monzon, Benvenuti easily made the transition to life after boxing. His outgoing personality and handsome features have served him well. He has appeared in some films and is currently a broadcaster for RAI, the national Italian television and radio network. He calls most major European sports—soccer, tennis, golf, skiing, auto racing, and boxing. Tennis and golf are his favorite sports to cover.

While the relationship between the media and the athlete is sometimes contentious, Benvenuti has never had a problem.

"I don't put myself in a journalist's shoes," he said. "I was an athlete first. So I am on the same page with athletes. I feel what they are going through. It's not difficult for me at all. My experience as a boxer helps me in journalism."

As part of his job, Benvenuti was always around boxing. Only now, though, is he taking an interest outside of broadcasting. The return has been a long, slow process.

"When I finished boxing, I really had to detach myself from it," he explained. "If I stayed a part of it, my heart would have been broken. If I trained someone and something bad happened, I didn't want to be responsible. I couldn't live with that. For a long time, I didn't watch boxing. I didn't know anything about it. Now I enjoy watching."

Benvenuti is a fan of Michele Piccirillo, the Italian who recently won the IBF welterweight title, and finds himself watching more and more fights in his spare time.

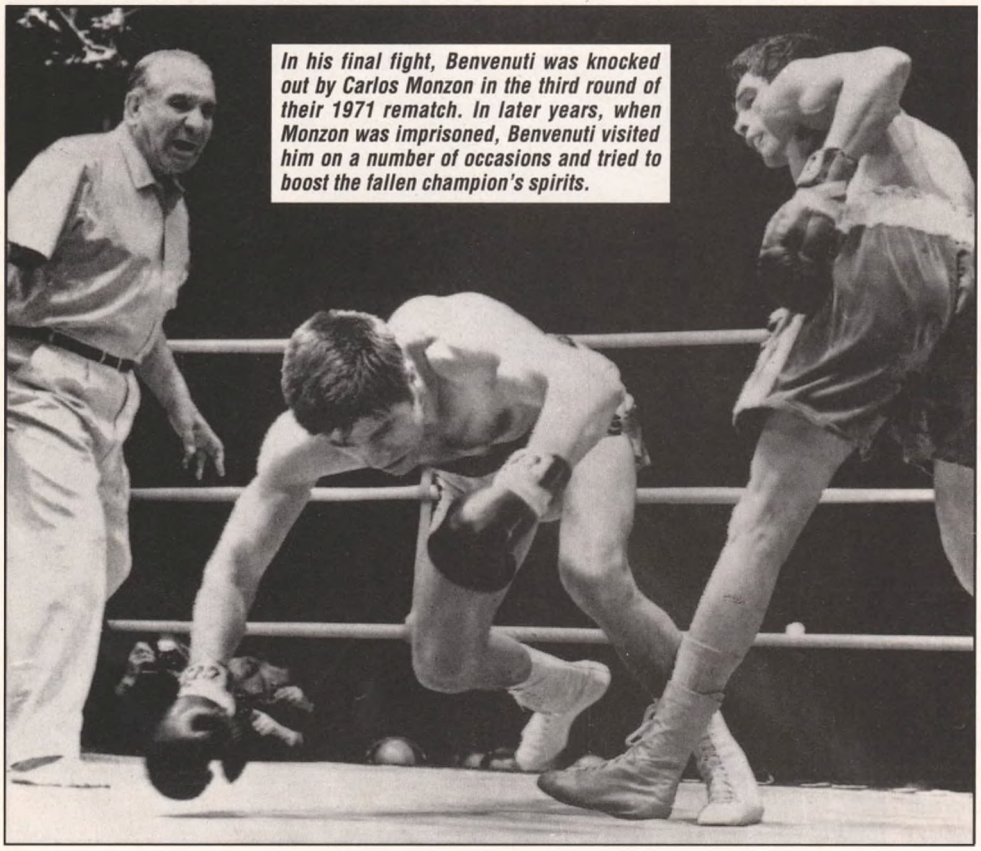
"When a fight is beautiful, I love it," he said. "I love to watch beautiful boxers. But I don't like seeing fighters bite each other's ears."

Although he is reluctant to train anyone, Benvenuti recently started to nurture the careers of amateurs. On July 4, in Rome, he organized a national amateur boxing event with fighters from several different countries competing.

When asked if this event could lead him into promoting pro boxing, Benvenuti's face lit up. "Yes," he said. "Maybe in the future."

The future of boxing in Italy is already looking better. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of this magazine and a regular contributor.



In his final fight, Benvenuti was knocked out by Carlos Monzon in the third round of their 1971 rematch. In later years, when Monzon was imprisoned, Benvenuti visited him on a number of occasions and tried to boost the fallen champion's spirits.

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

John Ruiz W Disq. 10 Kirk Johnson
(Retains WBA Title)
Wladimir Klitschko KO 6 Ray Mercer
Clifford Etienne D 10 Frans Botha
Michael Grant KO 3 Robert Davis
Lawrence Clay-Bey KO 3 Brian Nix
Lamon Brewster KO 6 Willie Chapman
DaVarryl Williamson KO 5 Corey Sanders
Larry Holmes W 10 Butterbean
Gilbert Martinez W 10 David Bostice
Przemyslaw Saleta KO 8 Luan Krasniqi
Tommy Martin KO 1 Andy Sample
Robert Wiggins KO 1 Quinton Osgood
Marcelo Dominguez KO 3
Eduardo Sandivares
Nikolai Valouev W 12 Tras Bidenko
Duncan Dokiwari W 8 David Vedder
Owen Beck KO 4 Rogerio Lobo
Rich LaMontagne KO 11 Michael Bennett
Faruq Saleem KO 3 Dan Wofford
Dennis Bakhtov KO 5 Mikhail Bekish
Bert Cooper W 10 Craig Tomlinson
Francis Royal KO 1 Jo-El Scott
Dominick Guinn KO 1 Wade Lewis
Malik Scott KO 7 Lyle McDowell
Al Cole W 6 Vinny Maddalone
Tye Fields KO 3 Francis Royal
John Poore KO 2 Jason Jenkins
Guru Singh W 4 Andrew Hutchinson
Samuel Peter KO 2 Cornelius Ellis
Paolo Vidoz W 6 Joe Lenart
Calvin Brock W 6 Antonio Colbert
Audley Harrison W 6 Dominic Negus

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Jean-Marc Mormeck KO 8 Dale Brown
(Retains WBA Title)
O'Neil Bell KO 4 Eric Davis
Julian Letterlough KO 4 Lloyd Bryan
Guillermo Jones W 10 Sione Asipeli
Rudiger May D 12 Alexander Petkovic
Rich LaMontagne KO 1 Art Jimmerson

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Bruno Girard W 12 Lou Del Valle
(Retains WBA Title)
Antonio Tarver KO 5 Eric Harding
Montell Griffin W 12 Derrick Harmon
Julio Gonzalez KO 9 Jonathan Young
George Jones W 10 Demetrius Jenkins
Elvir Muriqi KO 3 Sammy Ahmad
Etianne Whitaker KO 2 Brian Zordich
Librado Andrade KO 2 Pat Lawlor
Daniel Judah W 8 Kerry Parks
Chad Dawson W 6 Faustino Gonzalez

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Byron Mitchell KO 4 Julio Cesar Green
(Retains WBA Title)
Antwun Echols KO 3 Richard Grant
Antwun Echols KO 1 Oscar Bravo
Charles Brewer KO 6 Scott Pemberton
Anthony Mundine KO 3 Lester Ellis
Aaron Davis W 10 Ross Thompson
Robin Reid W 12 Francisco Mora
Carl Daniels W 12 Nicolas Cervera
Glenn Catley W 8 Vage Kocharyan
Anthony Hanshaw W 10 E.T. Whitaker
Dana Rosenblatt Tech. Draw 3
Juan Carlos Viloria
Mehdi Sahnoune KO 5 Ivica Cukusic
Lawrence Chapman W 8 Shannon Miller
James Crawford KO 2 Joe Hughes
James Coker W 8 Alex Rios
Jose Spearman W 6 Donnie Penelton
Kelly Pavlik KO 1 Eric Olds
Yusaf Mack KO 4 John McKinney
Jacqui Frazier-Lyde KO 3 Heidi Hartmann

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Robert Allen Tech. Win 6 Tito Mendoza
Jorge Sendra KO 8 Xavi Moya
Hussain Osman W 12 Gary Logan
Akira Ohigashi KO 2 Rolando Puritos
Sam Soliman W 12 Sean Sullivan
Kelly Pavlik KO 1 Abel Hernandez

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Marco Antonio Barrera absorbs a jab from Erik Morales in their featherweight title tilt

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Javier Castillejo W 12 Roman Karmazin
Andrei Pestriaev W 12 Steve Roberts
Santiago Samaniego KO 12
Mamadou Thiam
Angel Hernandez W 12 Larry Marks
J.C. Candelo W 10 Alfred Ankamah
Tokunbo Olajide KO 5 Gary Jones
Verno Phillips KO 4 Tony Badea
Robert Frazier W 10 Curtis Barker
Freddie Cuevas KO 7 Wilfredo Rivera
Nader Hamdan W 12 Nobuhiro Ishida
Travis Simms KO 1 Alex Carillo
Shannan Taylor KO 9 Armand Ajadato
Mihaly Kotai KO 1 Howard Clarke
Dante Craig W 6 Najal Turpin
Anthony Thompson W 4 Joseph Christy

WELTERWEIGHTS

Vernon Forrest W 12 Shane Mosley
(Retains World Title)
Sharmba Mitchell W 10 Frank Houghtaling
Teddy Reid KO 3 Germaine Sanders
Cosme Rivera W 12 Golden Johnson
Jose Rivera KO 2 Elias Cruz
Jose Celaya Tech. Win 10 Hector Quiroz
Miguel Figueroa W 10 Israel Cardona
Jawaid Khaliq W 12 Jose Rosa
Roberto Ortega KO 3 Henry Bruseles
Sergio Martinez W 8 Vasile Surcica
Joseph Makaringe W 12 Vincent Nobela
Wayne Martell W 10 Meldrick Taylor
Sebastian Valdez KO 7 Agustin Caballero
Kermit Cintron KO 2 Otilio Villarreal
Anthony Washington W 6 Dillon Carew
Fred Cadena KO 1 Carlos Rocha
Dmitriy Salita W 6 Arturo Medina
Ian MacKillop KO 2 Jonathan Nelson
Jeffrey Resto KO 3 Livingstone Bramble
Sumya Anani KO 4 Jane Couch

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Zab Judah W 10 Omar Weis
Jose Luis Castillo KO 3 Verdell Smith
Ener Julio D 12 Saul Duran
Vivian Harris W 12 Ubaldo Hernandez
Junior Witter KO 2 Laatekwei Hammond
Alex Trujillo W 10 Juan Valenzuela
Emanuel Augustus KO 8 Carlos Vilches
Miguel Cotto KO 5 Justin Juuko
Miguel Cotto KO 3 Carlos Ramirez
Mike Stewart KO 3 Brad Jensen
Tadashi Yuba KO 9 Ajib Alvarado Ishimaru
Kelson Pinto W 10 Dagoberto Najera
Kelson Pinto KO 3 Roger Flores
Andre Eason W 8 Jaime Morales
Oscar Diaz KO 6 Jose Luis Montes
Demetrius Hopkins W 8 Edwin Vazquez

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Juan Lazcano KO 5 Benito Rodriguez
Dorin Spivey KO 5 Alexis Perez
Julien Lorcy KO 4 Sassou Kodjo
Lamar Murphy KO 8 Dairo Esalas
Yong Soo Choi KO 1
Suphachai Poh Surasak
Steve Quinonez Tech. Win 7
Jose Luis Juarez
Nate Campbell KO 5 Carlos Navarro
Jason Cook KO 3 Sandro Casamonica
Kevin Kelley W 12 Humberto Soto
Jon Thaxton KO 7 Marc Waelkens
Gabriel Ruelas W 6 Eugene Vassar
Martin Jacobs KO 9 Irvin Buhlalu
Juan Diaz W 10 Michael Davis
Hugo Lewis W 8 Adan Hernandez
Almazbek Raiymkulov KO 2
Douglas Villarreal

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Acelino Freitas W 12 Daniel Attah
(Retains WBA "Super" Title)
Jesus Chavez KO 7
Julio Cesar Sanchez-Leon
Jorge Barrios D 10 Ricardo Silva
Affif Djelti W 12 Pedro Miranda
Tontcho Tontchev Tech. Win 6 Luis Villalta
Rogers Mtagwa D 10 Edwin Santana
Dean Pithie W 12 Alex Moon
Jorge Paez KO 3 Augustine Lorenzo
Yoni Vargas W 12 Gerardo Mellado
Carl Johanneson KO 4 James Baker

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Erik Morales
(Wins Vacant World Title)
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 10
Hector Marquez
Frankie Toledo KO 6 Leonard Martinez
Lehlo Ledwaba W 12 Vuyani Bungu
Hector Velazquez W 10 Guty Espadas
Juan Carlos Ramirez W 10
Hector Acero-Sanchez
Antonio Cermeno W 8 Marcos Badillo
Manuel Calvo KO 6 Aneure Cuevas
Wilfredo Vazquez KO 3 Eddy Saenz
Akihiro Kanai KO 3 Daniel Diolan
Phillip Payne W 10 Carlos Diaz
Jose Aguiniga W 8 Evangelio Perez
Rocky Juarez KO 2 Isidro Tejedor

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Yoddamrong Sithyodthong KO 2
Edward Escriber
Emmanuel Lucero Tech. Draw 1
Angel Chacon
Hideki Todaka KO 4
Saencharoen Mahasapcondo
Marcos Badillo W 10 Steve Dotse
Frankie Archuleta KO 3 Osvaldo Guerrero
Salim Medjkoune KO 1 Dimitar Alipiev
Andrian Kaspari W 12 Virgo Warouw
Gerardo Espinosa W 12 Omar Adorno
Ricardo Medina KO 4 Rodolfo Blanco
Mahyar Monshipour KO 6 Turcay Kaya
Junichi Watanabe W 10 Shinobu Hirato
Sod Looknongyangtoy W 12
Jaime Barcelona
Chung Jae-Kwang KO 6 So Jung-Seok
Nobuto Ikehara W 10 Phorn Saengmorakot
Armando Guerrero W 8 Sal Garcia
Jose Aguiniga KO 4 Ruben Lopez

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Tim Austin KO 10 Adan Vargas
(Retains IBF Title)
Rafael Marquez KO 5 Jorge Otero
Danny Romero KO 1 Domingo Guillen
Hugo Dianzo W 12 Francisco Tejedor
Mauricio Pastrana Tech. Draw 2
Isidro Garcia
Yokthai Sithoar KO 4 Rodel Orais
Pete Frissina W 12 Jesus Perez
Ratanachai Vorapin W 6 Andy Alagenio
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 5 Gilberto Bolanos
Dario Azuaga KO 1 Jose Cabrera
Steve Dotse KO 1 Carlos Nogueras
Silence Mabuza KO 4 Zolile Mbityi
Steve Molitor W 10 Jose DeJesus Lopez
Carlos Madrigal KO 4 Luis Maleva
Clarence Vinson W 8 Jose Beltran

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Alexander Munoz KO 2 Eiji Kojima
(Retains WBA Title)
Fernando Montiel KO 6 Pedro Alcazar
Medgoen Singsurat KO 4 Rolly Mandahinog
Hideyasu Ishihara Tech. Win 7 Joel Avila
Gabula Vabaza KO 1 Mogama Shabaani
Sot Skinduregym W 12 Rey Llagas
Luis Perez KO 1 Roberto Bonilla
Elena Reid KO 5 Yolanda Gonzalez

FLYWEIGHTS

Omar Narvaez W 12 Adonis Rivas
Alexander Mahmutov KO 4 Alexei Sinitsin
Malcolm Tunacao KO 4 Khakar Sabitov
Jose Antonio Lopez Bueno KO 2
Vlado Bukovy
Hiroshi Nakano W 12 Anthony Villamor
Brian Viloria No-Contest 3 Alberto Rossel

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Jorge Arce KO 6 Yosam Choi
(Wins WBC Title)
Melchor Cob Castro KO 9
Ruben Sanchez-Leon
Will Grigsby W 8 Kenny Berrios
Wendell Janiola W 12 Bert Batawang
Tatsuo Hayashida W 12 Jinho Kim
Ivan Calderon W 10 Alejandro Moreno

STRAWWEIGHTS

Miguel Barrera W 12 Roberto Leyva
(Wins IBF Title)
Noel Arambulet W 12 Keitaro Hoshino
(Regains WBA Title)
Hiroyuki Abe W 10 Hiroshi Kasamatsu
Mohammad Rachman KO 3 Ittarit V. Vizetkij
Pornsawan Porpramook KO 1Nico Thomas

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PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

Chris Johnson was rated sixth at light heavyweight by THE RING when Antonio Tarver beat him silly in the summer of 2001. Reggie Johnson was number three at light heavy when Tarver dominated him a few months later. Eric Harding was THE RING's number-two contender when Tarver knocked him out this past July. Suffice to say, it's been a good year for "The Magic Man" from Orlando, Florida.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

But as good as the wins over Johnson & Johnson were, the Harding kayo was the crowning achievement of Tarver's ascent to the top of the 175-pound rankings. Risking his number-one IBF ranking against the only man to beat him as a professional (quite convincingly and brutally, no less), Tarver showed skill, power, and finishing prowess in upsetting the slippery, gifted Harding. It was by far the biggest win of his career, and it made him the most deserving challenger for world champion Roy Jones.

Does that mean he'll get a shot at Jones? Not necessarily. In fact, he may have hurt his chances by looking so dangerous against Harding. Tarver said after the victory, "I'm the best light heavyweight in the world. If Roy Jones wants to prove differently, tell him to meet me at the negotiating table."

Let's hope Jones does want to prove him wrong. Until then, though, we can't quite call Tarver the best light heavyweight in the world. But we can call him the Fighter of the Month.

• • • •

Antonio Tarver

RINGSIDE REPORTS

John Ruiz W Disq. 10 Kirk Johnson

Las Vegas, Nevada: If Johnson had gone any lower on this night, he'd have been swimming in the Rio Grande.

Expecting to end the scheduled 12-round affair on a career high, the 2-to-1 betting favorite instead went south of the equator throughout the night, submerging his career with its first professional loss. By the time referee Joe Cortez (USA) called things off at 2:17 of the 10th round, Ruiz, 38-4-1 (27), looked more like a victim of Lorena Bobbitt than like a prize fighter.

Johnson, 32-1-1 (23), put Ruiz on the deck for lengthy delays with low blows in the first, fourth, and seventh rounds, and his own lack of discipline, combined with some overacting by the defending WBA heavyweight titlist, got the challenger disqualified when he strayed arguably low again in the 10th. Whether you thought Ruiz (who escaped penalty for a deliberate headbutt attempt in the fourth) was looking for a cheap win, Cortez was blowing the calls, or the ending was perfectly just, you couldn't deny that this was the ugliest major heavyweight bout in recent memory.

HBO also took the low road in this one, campaigning desperately for a Lennox Lewis-Johnson title match and showing a general lack of respect for Ruiz. Throughout the bout, the commentators tended to overlook Ruiz' constant pressure as a possible reason why Johnson, 238, North Preston, Nova Scotia, frequently aimed for the family jewels.

Most ringsiders had Ruiz, 233, Chelsea, Massachusetts, ahead at the time of the stoppage, thanks in part to Johnson point deductions in rounds one and seven, and the lead should have been heftier due to two ninth-round knockdowns that weren't declared knockdowns. Ruiz connected with a sharp, sneaky right hand to the chin—the only noteworthy legal blow of the entire fight—that was lost in the mix of a wrestling takedown. When both fighters rose to their feet, Ruiz sent Johnson down again with a flurry as the bell intervened. Again, Cortez ruled no knockdown.

In the 10th round, as Ruiz closed in to administer further punishment, Johnson, sporting abrasions about the right eye, unloaded one last borderline left uppercut (which replays showed was more on the belt than below it), prompting Cortez to end the ugliness.

"I don't know what happened," was Johnson's only response. "It was terrible. It was my fault."

"I'm tired of this crap," answered Ruiz, failing to take any of the blame for what ugly, mauling affairs his fights have become. "There's only so much I can take. He took me out of my game plan. I don't know what he was thinking."

Even in victory, Ruiz' performance was plagued by lulls of inactivity and was met with little praise. While he constantly moved forward throughout the fight, he sometimes abandoned his jab, allowing Johnson to score with left jabs and looping rights. All three judges had Ruiz ahead at the time of the DQ, thanks to the two point deductions. Ruiz, 30, earned $1.5-million for the fight, while Johnson, also 30, pocketed $1-million.

Promoter: Don King Productions

(7-27-02)

Ted Bodenrader

Byron Mitchell KO 4 Julio Cesar Green

Las Vegas, Nevada: Promoter Don King loudly and publicly blasted executives from HBO for their decision not to televise the fight between WBA super middleweight titleholder Mitchell and Green on the Ruiz-Johnson undercard. After about 11 minutes of blazing action at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, one had to suspect the HBO bosses had come to rue their decision.

Former middleweight beltholder Green hadn't won a fight in more than three years coming in, but was surprisingly sharp in the early going and had Mitchell on the canvas twice in the first round. But the hard-punching Mitchell, who longs for a fight with Felix Trinidad, rallied and won by a fourth-round TKO when Green was cut around the left eye.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Johnson's low blows had Ruiz on the canvas three times

It was an entertaining bout fought in front of a nearly empty arena, but those who saw it were gasping. Each man landed thunderous punches flush on the chin and had the opponent in trouble on more than one occasion.

Mitchell, making the second defense of his second title reign, was a heavy favorite, but he nearly failed to make it out of the first round. The consistently inconsistent beltholder has struggled in all of his title fights—against Frankie Liles, Bruno Girard (twice), and Manny Siaca (twice)—but never was he in as much trouble as early as he was against the veteran Green.

Slightly more than halfway

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mitchell connects with a right to Green's noggin

through the first round, Green, 168, Brooklyn, New York, via Dominican Republic, ripped a right hand that sent Mitchell sprawling to the canvas. When he got up, he was clearly dazed and in serious trouble. Green jumped on him and landed a series of punches before putting him down a second time with a left in the waning seconds of the round. Mitchell's title reign was in jeopardy.

"Green was stronger than I expected," Mitchell said. "He hit me with a couple of hard shots and he hurt me a couple of times. After that, I was wary of his power, but I was in great shape and was able to regain my composure."

Green controlled the second round, but lost a point when referee Vic Drakulich (USA) penalized him for holding.

The 28-year-old Mitchell, 167½, Ozark, Alabama, began to come back in the third round and cut Green with a short right near the end of the stanza. In the fourth, Mitchell, 25-1-1 (18), put Green down and then began to batter him around the ring. The cut around Green's left eye increased in size, and Drakulich opted to have ringside physician Margaret Goodman look at it at 1:55 of the round. She didn't like what she saw, saying that Green's left pupil wasn't reacting normally, and opted to stop the fight.

That didn't please Green, 25-5-1 (17), who begged for a rematch.

"It was a premature stoppage," said the 35-year-old fighter. "I was in control of the fight and could have continued. I am very happy with my performance. I had a job to do and I came in and did it."

(7-27-02)

Kevin Iole

Jorge Arce KO 6 Yosam Choi

Seoul, South Korea: It was a long wait, but it was worth it. Arce spent almost two years anticipating his mandatory shot at WBC light flyweight titleholder Choi, enduring the South Korean's 13-month inactive stretch and watching lesser challengers get shots first, but when his chance finally came at Olympic Park, Arce unleashed his frustration with a career-best performance. He dominated Choi from the start and forced a stoppage in round six, capping a magnificent comeback from a devastating, career-threatening loss three years earlier.

It was in July '99 that Arce, way ahead on the scorecards, got dramatically kayoed in the 11th round by 31-year-old Michael Carbajal. Arce was just four days past his 21st birthday at the time, but he showed tremendous maturity and resolve by getting back in the ring immediately and embarking on a nine-fight winning streak that led him to the showdown with Choi. The improvements since the loss were obvious, as Arce, 23, built a big lead over the highly regarded titlist, never gave him openings to pull off a miracle, and ultimately took him out in style.

Arce started fast, throwing straight punches and knocking down the 30-year-old Choi midway through the first round with a right hand. Choi, making his fourth title defense, never got back on track against the Mexican challenger. Arce pounded him persistently, especially with hooks to the body, and had him seriously hurt before the bell came to Choi's rescue at the end of the fifth round. In the sixth, Arce, 30-3-1 (22), stunned the titlist with a powerful left hand followed by a right-left combination. Referee Larry O'Connell (England) jumped in and halted the bout at 1:21 with Choi in serious trouble.

A few days after the fight, Choi announced his retirement.

"I think three defenses of the title is good enough," Choi, 24-2 (13), told reporters. "I want to relax a little bit and then I will find something else to do."

Arce, meanwhile, called out legendary fellow Mexican Ricardo Lopez, his IBF counterpart, after the big victory.

Promoter: S & S Productions

(7-6-02)

Wladimir Klitschko KO 6 Ray Mercer

Atlantic City, New Jersey: You have to be impressed anytime you see a 6'7" heavyweight throw a double left hook. But when Ray Mercer's chin is on the end of those hooks, and Mercer's rear is on the canvas immediately thereafter, "impressed" isn't a strong enough word.

Simply put, there was hardly anything about number-one heavyweight contender Klitschko's performance at the Trump Taj Mahal that you could criticize. He showed excellent power, a sharp jab, a diverse offensive arsenal, and a good balance of discipline and aggression. Throw in a first-round knockdown (only the second time the cement-chinned Mercer has been down as a pro) and a sixth-round stoppage (the first kayo loss of Mercer's 36-fight career), and you have a display that makes it appear you're looking at a superstar in the making.

That is, if you're willing to overlook the fact that Mercer was too old and too small to do anything other than make Klitschko look that way.

That was the double-edged sword of this matchup for the 26-year-old Ukrainian—struggle and you're exposed, dominate and you're not being tested. The latter was the case here, so a plethora of questions still remain. But you can't deny that Klitschko did his job as perfectly as anyone could have asked him to.

Mercer, 228, Atlantic City, New Jersey, came right out and showed he could give Klitschko, 243, some competition in a jabbing match, but when the powerpunches came out, it was no contest. Klitschko wobbled the 41-year-old Mercer with a stiff right hand, and with about 20 seconds to go in the round, he rocked him with a crushing hook, followed immediately by a so-so second hook that landed before Mercer's body had a chance to come out from under him. He was stretched out on his back for a few seconds, looking like he was thinking about staying there, then suddenly sprung up as referee Randy Neumann (USA) reached the count of six, and asked for more. The bell sounded before Klitschko could do much to honor his request.

It was all Klitschko the rest of the way, with Mercer doing nothing offensive besides jabbing (according to CompuBox, he threw just 10 powershots all night). He spent several stretches along the ropes trying to bait Klitschko in, waiting for opportunities to counter with one big shot, but the opportunities never came.

Mercer's eyes began swelling in the second round, mostly from the pole-ax jab he made little effort to avoid. His own jab had Klitschko marked up under his left eye by the end of the third round, but the damage was purely superficial. A huge one-two wobbled "The Merciless One" in the fourth, and late in the fifth, a nasty cut opened up over Mercer's right eye from the persistent pounding. A vicious left-right early in the sixth sent Mercer reeling into a neutral corner, his bleeding becoming profuse, and when he took a series of followup shots without launching any offense of his own, Neumann called a well-timed halt at the 1:08 mark.

"He caught me with a big punch in the first round, and I never regrouped," said Mercer, 30-5-1 (22), who earned a $650,000 payday. "I'm 41 years old, and if he wants to claim a big victory, let him."

Klitschko, who earned $1.2-million, didn't let the criticism over the insignificance of his victory bother him, and proceeded to call out heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis after the fight.

"I hope Lennox will say yes and take this fight for real," said Klitschko, 39-1 (36). "From my side, I am ready."

Maybe Klitschko knows something about himself that we don't, but from what we've been shown so far, the overwhelming positives are still accompanied by quite a few question marks.

Klitschko overwhelms the older, smaller Mercer

Television: HBO

Promoters: Cedric Kushner Promotions, Dee Lee Promotions

(6-29-02)

Eric Raskin

Bruno Girard W 12 Lou Del Valle

Palavas-les-Flots, France: The first meeting between these two ended in a controversial draw, and the rematch, almost inevitably, proved contentious too. This time, WBA light heavyweight beltholder Girard, 174, France, prevailed via split decision against former titlist Del Valle, 174½, Bronx, New York, who naturally claimed he was the victim of hometown discrimination in his bid to recapture the belt he lost four years earlier.

The only reason this fight had "title" status was due to the WBA's ingenuity in the matter of sanctioning fees. Not content with Roy Jones, the unified champion, fitting in his mandatory obligations around his commitments also to the WBC and IBF, the WBA elevated him to the role of "super champion," creating the opening for another WBA titleholder in the 175-pound class. Whatever Girard and Del Valle were to produce, they would always have struggled to avoid their matchup being categorized as second-class.

In the second round, it lost class entirely. Girard, 42-2-2 (7), butted the American and opened a cut over his left eye, clearly a real problem for him so early in the fight. Referee Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) deducted a point immediately. Girard, however, continued with his aggressive tactics. His strategy was clearly to retain the initiative by whatever means.

By legitimate means, he had a big round in the fifth, hurting Del Valle, 31-3-1 (21), with a series of solid shots to head and body that might have been too much for the challenger had he not shown commendable resolution. The fans were on their feet in anticipation of the climax, but Del Valle made it to the bell and the sanctuary of his corner.

From that point, it became a grim, grueling affair. Girard, 31, produced the higher workrate to sufficiently impress the judges, but Del Valle, celebrating his 34th birthday, had moments of success too. Judge Uriel Aguilera (Colombia) scored for Del Valle, 115-113, but he was overruled by scores of 116-111 from Ken Uchida (Japan) and 116-113 from Jose Laurino (Uruguay) in the Frenchman's favor.

Promoter: AB Stars

(7-13-02)

Brian Doogan

Antonio Tarver KO 5 Eric Harding

Indianapolis, Indiana: Tarver, deservedly ranked number one at 175 pounds by the IBF, bellowed loud and long for a title shot after exacting decisive revenge against the only man to beat him. Although the action before the knockout was sporadic and unexciting—though certainly no more so than the Vernon Forrest-Shane Mosley main event that followed at Conseco Fieldhouse—the thunder behind Tarver's triumph left many thinking he indeed might have proven himself a logical and worthy challenger to light heavyweight champion Roy Jones.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Tarver's power assault drops Harding

By the end of the evening, Forrest-Mosley had been upstaged by a non-title 10-rounder that elevated Tarver to the front of the contenders' pack, a level that the '96 Olympian was nearing before his loss to Harding two years earlier.

"He really gave me a beating the first time around," Tarver said of Harding. "But that was a blessing too, because for so long, I got away with just talent, by just being more gifted than everybody else. When I stepped up to the plate against a championship-caliber fighter, that wasn't good enough anymore. So I had to go back to the drawing board. I wanted nothing more than to right the wrong of two years ago. And I think I did that."

Tarver, 20-1 (17), resolved three lackluster rounds with a head-rattling fourth, when he scored the first of three knockdowns. The native of Orlando, Florida, later attributed his early lethargy to concern about repeating the injuries incurred during his first fight with Harding, when a broken jaw and rib cost Tarver dearly in a 12-round decision.

Tarver, 174, wasn't the one aching after the rematch, nor was he the one seeking career reparations.

"He just caught me with some shots I shouldn't have been caught by, but I'll be back," said Harding, 174½, East Hartford, Connecticut, who turns 30 in December.

Tarver—four years Harding's senior—wobbled Harding badly, and produced a cut over his right eye, with a counter left hand early in the fourth round. Harding, who swept the first three rounds, failed to tie Tarver up, absorbed a heavy followup flurry, and finally went down just before the bell sounded.

Tarver pressed his advantage in the fifth round and dropped Harding, 21-2-1 (7), with a four-punch combination. Tarver motioned from the neutral corner for the fight to be stopped. Indeed, the contest probably should have ended right there, but referee Bill Paige (USA) allowed it to continue for one more brutal knockdown before waving off the fight 43 seconds into the fifth.

Tarver waited 25 months to avenge the June 2000 loss that propelled Harding into his own title shot against Jones that same year, which Jones won when a biceps injury prompted Harding's corner to stop the fight in the 10th round. Now Tarver wants his more decisive victory in the rematch to do the same for him, although at press time Jones was preparing for a September 7 title defense against undeserving Clinton Woods.

"You've got a fighter, in me, who's deserving of the opportunity," said Tarver, who scored solid wins over Lincoln Carter, Chris Johnson, and Reggie Johnson between the two Harding fights. "Make Roy Jones step up and fight a qualified fighter. I'm the only one who's deserving. I'm the only fighter in the top 10 who isn't already on his resume. I want that opportunity to prove to the world that I belong. And Roy Jones is the only one who can make those dreams come true."

Television: HBO

Promoter: Pacers Sports and Entertainment

(7-20-02)

David Mayo

Noel Arambulet W 12 Keitaro Hoshino

Yokohama, Japan: Venezuelan ex-titlist Arambulet, 105, regained the WBA minimum belt as he kept moving and punching all the way and withstood the desperate retaliation of defending champ Hoshino, 105, Japan, to earn a majority decision over 12 heats. Although Luis Rivera (USA) saw the fight even at 114-114, Derek Milham (Australia) and Erkki Meronen (Finland) agreed that Arambulet had prevailed convincingly, scoring 117-112 and 117-111, respectively.

The slick, tall Venezuelan got off to a good start by throwing light but busy punches at the cautious champ. Arambulet was in command with his hit-and-run tactics throughout the first five sessions.

Hoshino, 32, turned loose in the sixth, but Arambulet, 28, regained his initiative from the seventh round on. When Hoshino would occasionally score with good shots, Arambulet consistently fought back with faster combinations to the face and belly.

The final stanza saw Arambulet, 18-2-1 (10) with 1 no-contest, penalized a point for a low blow by South African referee Stanley Christodoulou, while Hoshino, 23-8 (6), became aggressive, if not necessarily any more effective. On the whole, Hoshino, making his first defense of his second WBA title reign, simply lacked his usual zip and sharpness, and was never able to find a rhythm due to Arambulet's constant movement.

Since Arambulet first won the title in October '99, the belt has bounced around quite a bit, changing hands six times in less than three years. Perhaps now, in his second reign, the Venezuelan will start a new trend and prove to be a more enduring force.

Promoter: Hanagata Promotions in association with Teiken Promotions

(7-29-02)

Joe Koizumi ■

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

showing the skills fight fans originally expected.

"I feel like I've always been a great fighter, but I didn't feel so great after that first fight," recalled Vinson. "And what happens my pro debut? Madison Square Garden. HBO. It was so close to home, a lot of my people were up there to see me, and I get booed.

"I just felt terrible that day. I never felt you could win a fight and feel terrible like that. Nothing seemed to go my way in that fight. I heard the boos. I felt the boos, especially when I started speaking and the people were just booing over me talking. I dealt with it. Actually, to be honest, now I wouldn't want a different pro debut than what I had. The reason being is that I not only fought a tough, durable guy, I had to fight through a cut and people booing me. In my pro debut, I got to see how pro boxing really is, all in one night. My pro debut was not sugarcoated. That was an experience that God wanted me to go through."

Due to that occurrence, the 24-year-old Vinson feels his development has progressed much faster than the other '00 Olympians. His pro debut was an experience that hastened his way through the learning curve, forcing him to deal with adversity much sooner than any of his fellow Olympians.

The night of January 27, 2001, Vinson's United States Olympic teammates Ricardo Williams, Jose Navarro, Jermain Taylor, Dante Craig, and Michael Bennett were all celebrating their pro debut victories, being pulled every which way by the media horde that was so interested in what these young fighters had to say. Vinson, on the other hand, sat dejectedly alone, after being berated by then-trainer Ham Johnson. No one was interested in him, other than offering tepid congratulations.

Then things got even worse for Vinson his second time out—if that's possible.

Vinson felt like he was walking the green mile as he headed up the aisle toward the ring. Placed in another prime position, on the undercard of the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed show on April 7, 2001, in Las Vegas, an emotionally fragile Vinson fought Bryan Garcia in a four-rounder. The boos rained down on Vinson again. This time, however, the fans' disapproval was not aimed at Vinson, but at the originally announced draw verdict.

A loss in the amateurs would send Vinson scurrying back to the gym the next day, or would depress him so much, he would even think about giving up boxing. But the announced draw in his second pro fight elicited no reaction at all, which frightened Vinson.

"I was just stuck there," Vinson said. "My mind wasn't even thinking about quitting or going back to the gym and training harder. I suppose it's the worst feeling you can have about something, like you don't care anymore."

But after Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, had the judges look at their scorecards again, it was determined the scores were misread and a second announcement gave the decision to Vinson. Some people even had nice things to say about Vinson, for a change. Former heavyweight champ and HBO ringside analyst George Foreman complimented Vinson on his hand speed and defensive movement. "Big George" told Vinson he had a bright future, and he should continue training hard.

A major change took place after the Garcia fight. At the suggestion of his manager, Gary Gittelsohn, Vinson decided to part ways with Johnson, the father of two-division former titlist Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson. Instead, Vinson opted to be trained by Adrian Davis, the former trainer of ex-heavyweight champ Hasim Rahman.

"Clarence was very dejected and very disappointed about his pro debut," Gittelsohn said. "We had some heart-to-hearts, and I wanted Clarence to realize that he probably learned more than the other guys in the Olympic group by starting out with such a tough guy. It was still a development period for him. Clarence wanted to surround himself with a team and a trainer that he could learn from. Adrian has been extremely helpful in getting Clarence to focus on what he needs to do to be a solid professional."

Under Davis, Vinson says he's learned to sit on his punches better. Davis has raised Vinson's confidence level and stressed the importance of his jab.

"I worked with Clarence a little before he went to the Olympics, and I saw him come up in the Washington, D.C., area, so I've always known Clarence," Davis said. "He's really turned himself around, and if any fighter listens to me, I can get him to the top. But I just wanted him to get back his confidence.

"Some people think they can get your attention by yelling and cursing at you, but I don't believe in that. That's something that doesn't work with Clarence. He's a very sensitive kid. After that pro debut, and his first two fights, his confidence was low. He had to realize he was in a different world, going from the amateurs to the pros.

"I'll tell you this: Clarence has guts, and he can really turn it on. He had too much amateur background when I got him. I want him to be a counterpuncher. I want him to be a good defensive fighter. Although he's short, I still want him to work on his jab. I want him to establish that better. But overall, I'm very pleased with Clarence."

Vinson has survived his tough early going in the pro game by following a simple mantra: "Whatever doesn't kill you can only make you stronger." Overcoming and adapting has been a way of life for him. Growing up in the northeast section of D.C., Vinson has seen many of his childhood friends either killed or incarcerated. He's witnessed close friends get their heads blown off by gun fire, and when Vinson was 15, his 27-year-old brother, John Smith, was murdered.

Consequently, Vinson got caught up in the street life, skirting trouble throughout his teens. He started boxing when he was eight and devoted himself even further to the sport when he came to realize he was too small to compete at a higher level in football or basketball.

He thought about turning pro in '97, but decided to give the Olympics a shot. He went on to win the national amateur 112-pound title in '97 and '98, and the 119-pound national crown in '99, before capturing bronze in Sydney, Australia.

His professional turnaround has not come without hardship, though. On October 24, 2001, Vinson lost his father, John, who died of lung cancer at 64, leaving only Vinson and his mother, Ruby.

"I have to stay strong for her," Vinson said. "She's been through a lot. She's lost her son, and now she's lost her husband. Before my father passed, he'd tell me I'd be a champ, laying up there on the hospital bed. I have to be. I have to make him happy."

You get the feeling Vinson already has. ■

Alphabet Ratings

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of June 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)
4. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
5. Oliver McCall (USA)
6. Larry Donald (USA)
7. Jameel McCline (USA)
8. David Tua (NZ)
9. Danny Williams (GB)
10. Hasim Rahman (USA)
11. Mike Tyson (USA)
12. Lamon Brewster (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
2. James Toney (USA)
3. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
4. Virgil Hill (USA)
5. O'Neil Bell (USA)
6. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
7. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
8. Luis Pineda (PAN)
9. Dale Brown (CAN)
10. Valery Brudov (RUS)
11. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
12. Michael Nunn (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Bruno Girard (FRA)
1. Lou Del Valle (USA)
2. Antonio Tarver (USA)
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. David Telesco (USA)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Reggie Johnson (USA)
7. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
8. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Rocky Torres (USA)
11. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
12. Rodney Moore (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
2. David Starie (GB)
3. Antwun Echols (USA)
4. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Thomas Tate (USA)
8. Markus Beyer (GER)
9. Manuel Siaca (PR)
10. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
11. Julio Cesar Green (DR)
12. Omar Sheika (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Felix Trinidad (PR)
2. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
3. Bert Schenk (GER)
4. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
5. Howard Eastman (GB)
6. Keith Holmes (USA)
7. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
8. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
9. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
10. Erland Betare (FRA)
11. Evans Ashira (DEN)
12. Lee Blundell (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Fernando Vargas (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
5. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
6. Angel Hernandez (USA)
7. Travis Simms (USA)
8. Michael Rask (DEN)
9. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
10. Steve Roberts (GB)
11. Mehrdud Takaloo (GB)
12. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GER)
4. Jose Rivera (USA)
5. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
6. Golden Johnson (USA)
7. Vincent Phillips (USA)
8. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
9. Danny Perez (USA)
10. Frederic Klose (FRA)
11. Felix Flores (PR)
12. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
1. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Randall Bailey (USA)
6. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
7. Micky Ward (USA)
8. Ener Julio (COL)
9. Omar Weis (ARG)
10. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
11. Miguel Cotto (PR)
12. James Leija (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Leonard Dorin (CAN)
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
3. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
4. Juan Lazcano (USA)
5. Raul Balbi (ARG)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
8. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
9. Angel Manfredy (USA)
10. Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)
11. Colin Dunne (GB)
12. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Joel Casanayor (CUB)
2. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
3. Phillip Ndou (SA)
4. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
5. Lakva Sim (MON)
6. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
7. Silvano Usini (ITA)
8. Carlos Hernandez (SAL)
9. Antonio Cermeno (VEN)
10. Jesus Chavez (MEX)
11. Daniel Attah (NIG)
12. Nate Campbell (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Injin Chi (KOR)
6. Lewis Woods (US)
7. Victor Polo (COL)
8. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
9. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
10. Chris John (IND)
11. Spend Abazi (DEN)
12. Oscar Leon (COL)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Osamu Sato (JAP)
1. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
2. Yober Ortega (VEN)
3. Paulie Ayala (USA)
4. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
5. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
6. Johnny Armour (GB)
7. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
8. Michael Brodie (GB)
9. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Napapol Kiattisachokchai (THAI)
12. Israel Vasquez (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Leo Gamez (VEN)
2. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
3. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
4. Eidy Moya (VEN)
5. Adan Vargas (MEX)
6. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
7. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
8. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
9. Genaro Garcia (USA)
10. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
11. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
12. Moises Castro (NIC)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)
3. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
4. Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
5. Celes Kobayashi (JAP)
6. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
7. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
8. Luis Bolanos (COL)
9. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
10. Luis Perez (NIC)
11. Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)
12. Takuya Kiya (JAP)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
4. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
5. Damaen Kelly (GB)
6. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
7. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
8. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
9. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
10. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
11. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Peter Culshaw (GB)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
3. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
4. Masibulele Makepula (SA)
5. Alex Sanchez (PR)
6. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
7. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
8. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
9. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
10. Ratanapol Vorapin (THAI)
11. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
12. Tatsuo Kayashida (JAP)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
1. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
2. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
3. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
4. Khulile Makeba (SA)
5. Daniel Reyes (COL)
6. Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)
7. Miguel Barrera (COL)
8. Manasak Yootthakit (THAI)
9. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
10. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
11. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
12. Wandee Charoen (THAI)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of August 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. Mike Tyson (USA)
5. Jameel McCline (USA)
6. David Tua (NZ)
7. Fres Oquendo (USA)
8. Chris Byrd (USA)
9. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
10. Danny Williams (GB)
11. Clifford Etienne (USA)
12. Jeremy Williams (USA)
13. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
14. Lamon Brewster (USA)
15. Tim Witherspoon (USA)
16. Michael Moorer (USA)
17. Ray Mercer (USA)
18. Joe Mesi (USA)
19. Larry Donald (USA)
20. Lance Whitaker (USA)
21. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
22. Maurice Harris (USA)
23. Monte Barrett (USA)
24. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
25. Vaughn Bean (USA)
26. Nikolay Valouev (RUS)
27. Timo Hoffman (GB)
28. Dimitry Bakhtov (KAZ)
29. Peter Okhello (UGA)
30. David Defiagbon (CAN)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
5. Louis Azille (DR)
6. Dale Brown (CAN)
7. James Toney (USA)
8. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
9. Michael Nunn (USA)
10. Turan Bagci (TUR)
11. Carlos Cruzat (CHI)
12. Jason Robinson (USA)
13. Bruce Scott (GB)
14. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
15. Kelvin Davis (USA)
16. Ramon Garbey (USA)
17. Rudiger May (GER)
18. Virgil Hill (USA)
19. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
20. Carl Thompson (GB)
21. Alain Simon (FRA)
22. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
23. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
24. Guillermo Jones (PAN)
25. Roman Kovalchuk (UKR)
26. Mohamed Ben Guesmia (ALG)
27. Kenny Keene (USA)
28. Frederic Serrat (FRA)
29. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
30. Gregory Drosd (RUS)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Clinton Woods (GB)
2. Yawe Davis (ITA)
3. Antonio Tarver (USA)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. Eric Harding (USA)
6. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
7. Reggie Johnson (USA)
8. Jorge Castro (ARG)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Derrick Harmon (USA)
11. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
12. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
13. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
14. David Telesco (USA)
15. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
16. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
17. Mario Tonus (ITA)
18. Silvio Branco (ITA)
19. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
20. Demetrius Jenkins (USA)
21. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
22. Stipe Drews (CRO)
23. George Jones (USA)
24. Arturo Rivera (MEX)
25. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
26. Rocky Torres (USA)
27. Sergio Baez (ARG)
28. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
29. Tony Oakey (GB)
30. Julian Letterlough (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Lucas (CAN)
1. Markus Beyer (GER)
2. David Starie (GB)
3. Danilo Haussler (GER)
4. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
5. Antwun Echols (USA)
6. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
7. Glenn Catley (GB)
8. Dingaan Thobela (SA)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Jurgen Brahmer (GER)
11. Mehdi Sanoune (FRA)
12. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
13. Dan Batchelder (USA)
14. Henry Porras (CR)
15. Robin Reid (GB)
16. Brian Magee (GB)
17. Mario Veit (GER)
18. Anthony Hanshaw (USA)
19. Scott Pemberton (USA)
20. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
21. Sam Hill (USA)
22. Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)
23. James Lubwana (UGA)
24. David Reid (USA)
25. Vinny Paz (USA)
26. Juan Nelongo (SPA)
27. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
28. Jeff Lacy (USA)
29. Ross Thompson (USA)
30. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Erland Betare (FRA)
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
4. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
5. Naotaka Hozumi (JAP)
6. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
7. Raymond Joval (HOL)
8. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
9. Robert Allen (USA)
10. Raul Marquez (USA)
11. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
12. Alejandro Berrio (COL)
13. Oure Evans (KEN)
14. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
15. Carl Daniels (USA)
16. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
17. Travis Simms (USA)
18. Andras Galfi (HUN)
19. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
20. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
21. Mariano Carrera (ARG)
22. Tony Ayala (USA)
23. Lansana Djallo (BEL)
24. Delroy Leslie (GB)
25. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
26. Quentin Smith (USA)
27. Jermain Taylor (USA)
28. Stephan Trabant (GER)
29. Satoru Suzuki (JAP)
30. Maselino Masoe (NZ)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
1. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
2. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
3. Bronco McKart (USA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
6. Wayne Alexander (GB)
7. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
8. Steve Roberts (GB)
9. Angel Hernandez (MEX)
10. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
11. Richard Williams (GB)
12. Kassim Ouma (USA)
13. Michael Rask (DEN)
14. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)
15. Alex Bunema (USA)
16. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
17. J.C. Candelo (COL)
18. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
19. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
20. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
21. Rodney Jones (USA)
22. Carlos Bojorquez (USA)
23. Emmett Linton (USA)
24. Sam Garr (USA)
25. Kirino Garcia (MEX)
26. Michael Jones (GB)
27. Joachim Alcine (CAN)
28. Christopher Henry (BAR)
29. Gary Jones (USA)
30. Joya Kawai (JAP)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vernon Forrest (USA)
1. Shane Mosley (USA)
2. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
5. Danny Perez (USA)
6. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
7. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
8. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
9. Rafael Pineda (COL)
10. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
11. Michel Trabant (GER)
12. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
13. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
14. Michele Orlando (ITA)
15. Christian Bladt (DEN)
16. Alexander Vetoux (UKR)
17. Golden Johnson (USA)
18. James Hare (GB)
19. Julian Holland (AUSTRL)
20. Alessandro Duran (ITA)
21. Felix Flores (PR)
22. Jeffrey Hill (USA)
23. Hassan Al (DEN)
24. Frederic Klose (FRA)
25. Juan Carlos Rubio (MEX)
26. Neil Sinclair (GB)
27. Luther Smith (USA)
28. Charles Whitaker (CAY)
29. Miguel Rodriguez (USA)
30. Carlos Quintana (PR)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. James Leija (USA)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Micky Ward (USA)
6. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
7. Zab Judah (USA)
8. Omar Weis (ARG)
9. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
10. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
11. Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)
12. Miguel Cotto (PR)
13. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
14. Eamonn Magee (GB)
15. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
16. Ben Tackie (GHA)
17. Golden Johnson (USA)

18. Ener Julio (COL)
19. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
20. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
21. Randall Bailey (USA)
22. Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)
23. Ricardo Williams (USA)
24. Vince Phillips (USA)
25. Junior Witter (GB)
26. Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)
27. Vivian Harris (USA)
28. Terronn Millett (USA)
29. Pablo Sarmiento (ARG)
30. Fabrice Colombel (FRA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
2. Steve Johnston (USA)
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
5. Carlos Gerena (PR)
6. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
7. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
8. Aldo Rios (ARG)
9. Colin Dunne (GB)
10. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
11. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
12. Sandro Casamonica (ITA)
13. Julian Wheeler (USA)
14. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
15. Jose Luis Juarez (MEX)
16. Diego Jimenez (ARG)
17. Julio Diaz (USA)
18. Zimele Mpusula (SA)
19. Miguel Callist (PAN)
20. Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)
21. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
22. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
23. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
24. Esteban Mortalez (COL)
25. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
26. Gary Balletto (USA)
27. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)
28. Michael Clark (USA)
29. Steve Murray (GB)
30. Gil Alipio (MEX)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
2. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Philip Ndou (SA)
5. Randy Suico (PHIL)
6. Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)
7. Affif Djelti (FRA)
8. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
9. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
10. Kevin Kelley (USA)
11. Daniel Alicea (PR)
12. Jorge Paez (MEX)
13. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
14. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
15. Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)
16. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
17. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
18. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
19. Mzonke Fana (SA)
20. Orlando Salido (MEX)
21. Nate Campbell (USA)
22. Yongsoo Choi (KOR)
23. Javier Alvarez (ARG)
24. Alex Arthur (GB)
25. Silvano Usini (ITA)
26. Lamont Pearson (USA)
27. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
28. Daniel Attah (NIG)
29. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
30. Ricardo Silva (ARG)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Erik Morales (MEX)
2. Injin Chi (KOR)
3. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Michael Brodie (GB)
6. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
7. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
8. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
9. Scott Harrison (GB)
10. Manuel Medina (MEX)
11. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
12. William Abelyan (USA)
13. Guty Espadas (MEX)
14. Junior Jones (USA)
15. Takalani Noluvo (SA)
16. Panther Yanagida (JAP)
17. Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)
18. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
19. Daniel Seda (PR)
20. Yangsoo Sung (KOR)
21. Orlando Soto (PAN)
22. David Murillo (MEX)
23. Zahir Raheem (USA)
24. Frankie Toledo (USA)
25. Cristobal Cruz (MEX)
26. Roger Medal (NIC)
27. Oscar Leon (COL)
28. Rocky Juarez (USA)
29. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
30. Anthony Tshehla (SA)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Willie Jorrin (USA)
1. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
2. Paulie Ayala (USA)
3. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
4. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
5. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
7. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
8. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
9. Jyunichi Nakazato (JAP)
10. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
11. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
12. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
13. Bones Adams (USA)
14. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
15. Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)
16. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
17. Youngjin Cho (KOR)
18. David Donis (USA)
19. Jaekwang Chung (KOR)
20. Fabio Oliva (ARG)
21. Yober Ortega (VEN)
22. Wethya Singwangcha (THAI)
23. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
24. Michael Alldis (GB)
25. Frankie Archuleta (USA)
26. Joan Guzman (DR)
27. Turcay Kaya (FRA)
28. Phillip Payne (USA)
29. Norihisa Tomimoto (JAP)
30. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Genaro Garcia (USA)
3. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
4. Jess Maca (PHIL)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Spend Abazi (DEN)
7. Noel Wilders (GB)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
10. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
11. Abner Cordero (PHIL)
12. Danny Romero (USA)
13. Julio Zarate (MEX)
14. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
15. Mark Johnson (USA)
16. Julio Gamboa (NIC)
17. Francisco Mateos (MEX)
18. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
19. Fabien Guillerme (FRA)
20. Kyonchul Park (KOR)
21. Eidy Moya (VEN)
22. Pete Frissina (USA)
23. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
24. Moises Castro (NIC)
25. Nicky Booth (GB)
26. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
27. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
28. Ryuichi Minoriyama (JAP)
29. Steve Molitor (CAN)
30. Eduardo Escobedo (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
2. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
3. Reynaldo Huriado (COL)
4. Luis Bolanos (COL)
5. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
6. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
7. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
8. Jose Beranza (MEX)
9. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
10. Sot Sot Veeraphol (THAI)
11. Shingo Sasaki (JAP)
12. Erick Lopez (MEX)
13. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
14. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
15. Luis Perez (NIC)
16. Eiji Kojima (JAP)
17. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
18. Alexander Knight (RUS)
19. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
20. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
21. Erik Barcelona (PHIL)
22. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
23. Julio Coronel (COL)
24. Jovy Oracion (PHIL)
25. Shin Ogata (JAP)
26. Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)
27. Tat Torres (MEX)
28. Lunga Ntontela (SA)
29. Roberto Bonilla (NIC)
30. Jose Navarro (USA)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
4. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
5. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
6. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
7. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
8. Hawk Makepula (SA)
9. Gerson Guerrero (MEX)
10. Everardo Morales (MEX)
11. Omar Narvaez (ARG)
12. Damaen Kelly (GB)
13. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
14. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
15. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
16. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
17. Koji Koyama (JAP)
18. Rolly Lunas (PHIL)
19. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
20. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
21. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
22. Hayato Asai (JAP)
23. Gabriel Elizondo (USA)
24. Evaristo Primero (MEX)
25. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
26. Peter Culshaw (GB)
27. Yosuke Morishima (JAP)
28. Gilberto Keb-Baas (MEX)
29. Jason Booth (GB)
30. Gabula Vabaza (SA)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Yosam Choi (KOR)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Agustin Luna (MEX)
4. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
5. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
6. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
7. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
8. John Molina (COL)
9. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
10. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
11. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
12. Victor Burgos (MEX)
13. Alex Sanchez (PR)
14. Pilkoo Kang (KOR)
15. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
16. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
17. Jun Kitano (JAP)
18. Vuyisile Bebe (SA)
19. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
20. Juan Centero (NIC)
21. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
22. Jinho Kim (KOR)
23. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
24. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
25. Minsoo Jang (KOR)
26. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
27. Omar Nino (MEX)
28. Keisuke Yokoyama (JAP)
29. Steve Msimango (SA)
30. Samransak Singmanassak (THAI)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
4. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
5. Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)
6. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
7. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
8. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
9. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
10. Juan Palacios (NIC)
11. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
12. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
13. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
14. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
15. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
16. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
17. Jairo Arango (PAN)
18. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
19. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
20. Omar Soto (MEX)
21. Eagle Okuda (JAP)
22. Wele Maqolo (SA)
23. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
24. Manny Melchor (PHIL)
25. Valentin Leon (MEX)
26. Fernando Luna (MEX)
27. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
28. Daisuke Iida (JAP)
29. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
30. Decho Bankluaygym (THAI)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of June 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Chris Byrd (USA)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. Jameel McCline (USA)
6. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
7. Monte Barrett (USA)
8. Fres Oquendo (USA)
9. Clifford Etienne (USA)
10. Tim Witherspoon (USA)
11. Oliver McCall (USA)
12. Eliecer Castillo (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. James Toney (USA)
5. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
6. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
7. Kelvin Davis (USA)
8. Dale Brown (CAN)
9. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
10. Jason Robinson (USA)
11. Jorge Castro (ARG)
12. Virgil Hill (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Derrick Harmon (USA)
4. Eric Harding (USA)
5. David Telesco (USA)
6. Reggie Johnson (USA)
7. Yawe Davis (ITA)
8. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
11. Silvio Branco (ITA)
12. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Otke (GER)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Antwun Echols (USA)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. David Starie (GB)
7. Thomas Tate (USA)
8. Markus Beyer (GER)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Richard Grant (USA)
11. Fernando Zuniga (USA)
12. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
4. Erland Betare (FRA)
5. Robert Allen (USA)
6. Carl Daniels (USA)
7. Raymond Joval (HOL)
8. Howard Eastman (GB)
9. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
10. Ali Ennebati (FRA)
11. Bert Schenk (GER)
12. Bea Diallo (BEL)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Bronco McKart (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Angel Hernandez (USA)
4. Alex Bunema (USA)
5. Steve Roberts (GB)
6. Kassim Ouma (USA)
7. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
8. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
9. Michael Rask (DEN)
10. J.C. Candelo (COL)
11. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
12. Robert Frazier (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Danny Perez (USA)
5. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
6. Cory Spinks (USA)
7. Rafael Pineda (COL)
8. Jose Rivera (USA)
9. James Hare (ENG)
10. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
11. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
12. Hector Quiroz (MEX)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Micky Ward (USA)
4. Carlos Vilches (ARG)
5. Arturo Gatti (USA)
6. Omar Weis (ARG)
7. Ben Tackie (GHA)
8. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
9. Zab Judah (USA)
10. James Leija (USA)
11. Teddy Reid (JAM)
12. Terronn Millett (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
5. Angel Manfredy (USA)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Julian Wheeler (USA)
8. Leavander Johnson (USA)
9. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
10. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
11. Dennis Holbaek (DEN)
12. Dorin Spivey (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Steve Forbes (USA)
1. Vacant
2. David Santos (USA)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Carlos Hernandez (USA)
5. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
6. Joel Casamayor (USA)
7. Daniel Alicea (USA)
8. Luis Lizarraga (USA)
9. Orlando Salido (MEX)
10. Nate Campbell (USA)
11. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
12. Lamont Pearson (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Tapia (USA)
1. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
2. Manuel Medina (MEX)
3. Oscar Leon (PR)
4. Frankie Toledo (USA)
5. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
6. Michael Brodie (ENG)
7. Victor Polo (COL)
8. William Abelyan (USA)
9. Naseem Hamed (ENG)
10. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
11. David Toledo (USA)
12. Scott Harrison (SCOT)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
4. F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)
5. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
6. Paulie Ayala (USA)
7. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
8. Fernando Velardez (USA)
9. Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Manou Fukashima (JAP)
12. David Donis (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Tim Austin (USA)
1. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
2. Vacant
3. Pete Frissina (USA)
4. Diego Morales (MEX)
5. Adan Vargas (MEX)
6. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
7. Mark Johnson (USA)
8. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
9. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
10. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
11. Toshiaki Nakajima (JAP)
12. Spend Abazi (DEN)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Felix Machado (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Martin Castillo (MEX)
4. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
5. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
6. Ricardo Vargas (USA)
7. Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)
8. Luis Bolano (COL)
9. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
10. Fahsung 3K-Battery (THAI)
11. Kobayashi Yosuke (JAP)
12. Oscar Andrade (MEX)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. David Guerault (FRA)
4. Damaen Kelly (GB)
5. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
6. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
7. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
8. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
9. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
10. Mike Trejo (USA)
11. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
12. Angel Priolo (COL)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Lopez (MEX)
1. Jose Burgos (MEX)
2. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
3. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
4. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
5. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
6. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
7. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
8. Jorge Arce (MEX)
9. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
10. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
11. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
12. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roberto Leyva (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
5. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
6. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
7. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
8. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
9. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
10. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
11. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
12. Eriberto Gejon (PHIL)

CLASSIC

From THE RING, November 1955

ACTION! CAMERA! IT'S ROCKY!

Marciano, Victor In 1:19 Of Ninth Round Over Archie Moore, Gains Recognition With All-Time Punchers

(Editor's Note: This is a condensed version.)

By Nat Fleischer

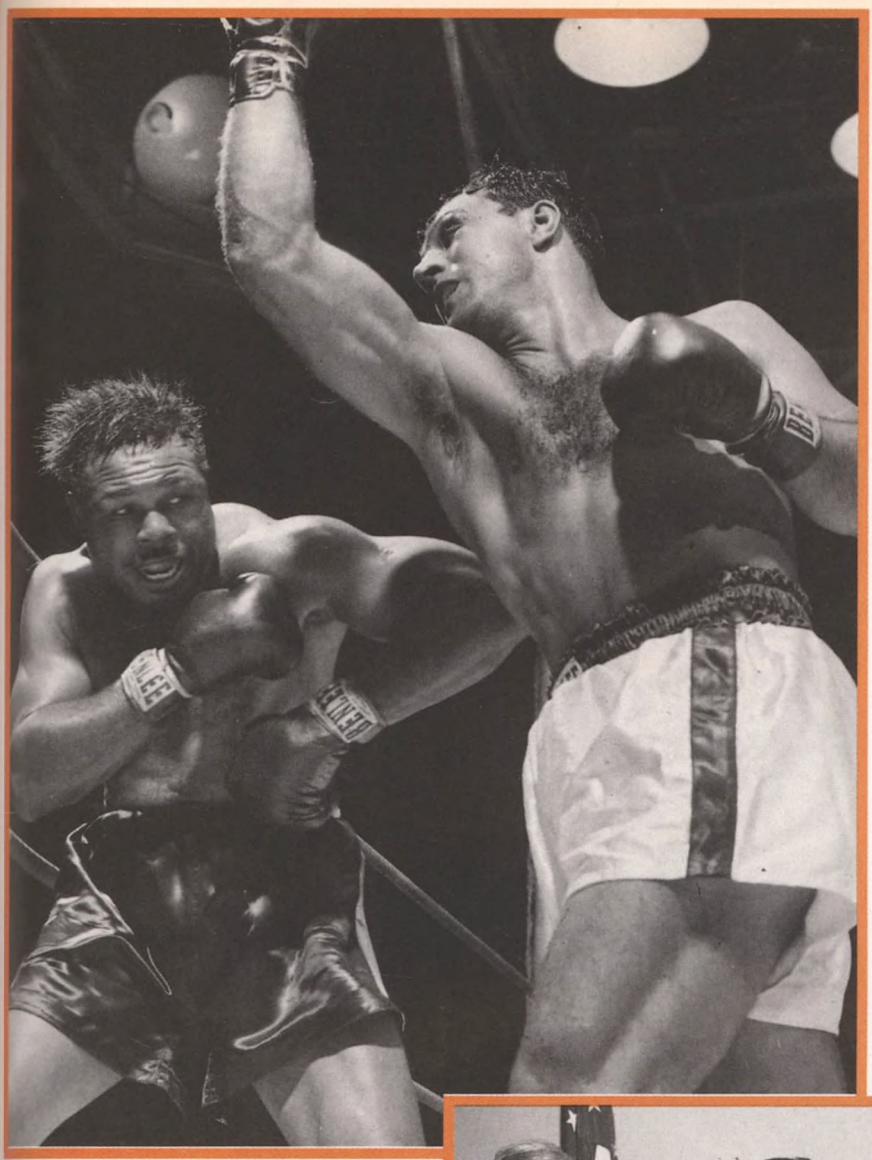
Rocky Marciano, the 31-year-old undefeated world heavyweight champion, did it again.

The clouting fists of "The Brockton Blockbuster" enabled him to add to his knockout record, this time the victim being Archie Moore, seven years his senior and a veteran of close to 20 years of ring activity. Making his sixth title defense since winning it from Jersey Joe Walcott, Rocky ended the aspirations of the cocky light heavyweight king, who was making a bid for heavyweight honors. He halted him in 1:19 of round nine to make this his 49th straight triumph and 43rd knockout. The kayo came after the challenger had been dropped four times and the champion once.

Moore, the master craftsman of the art of self-defense, failed to accomplish what he so frequently preached during his many weeks of training—the end of Rocky's reign. The age handicap plus the punching powers of the defending champion were too great an obstacle for the challenger to overcome. But he put up a sterling battle, fighting back, exchanging punches, and rocking his opponent on several occasions.

With 61,574 fans, who paid a gross of $948,117.95, watching the combat in the vast Yankee Stadium and millions more listening to the radio description in addition to the thousands who watched the fight on the screen in 133 theaters, in 92 cities, Marciano, as in almost every one of his previous contests, broke through the barrier after receiving plenty of punishment. However, once he gained the upper hand, he never relinquished it.

It was a splendid contest, true to the prebattle predictions, a fight in which a far superior all-around performer, a challenger who had engaged in all parts of the world in 144 bouts in which he stopped 82 rivals and was halted only four times himself, learned that



Archie Moore and Rocky Marciano packed 61,574 fans into Yankee Stadium to see this titanic battle of champions. "The Brockton Blockbuster" was defending the heavyweight title for the sixth time, while Moore attempted to become the first light heavyweight champion to win the heavyweight title.

though the thousands of words he had used in his camp interviews in belittling the prowess of the champion aided considerably in making this the greatest payday Archie ever had in two decades of boxing, they didn't to any extent affect the fighting qualities of "The Rock." If anything, it added to the determination of the defending champion to keep his record clean.

With the contest over, all eyes are now focused on the future. What's in store for both victor and vanquished since each is a crown wearer and will be called upon to defend his laurels?

Though a six-month period of grace is permitted under the rules before a champion must defend his laurels, the rule will have no bearing on Marciano's future. He had made it known that there will be no winter fight for him.

His manager, Al Weill, expects that after a long rest, The Rock will defend his crown again next June in New York, the city that enabled him to reap the richest harvest of the champ's career by turning out en masse to see him defend his crown, and in the interim he hopes to tour Italy on a good-will trip for the State Department.

Three heavyweights stand out as possible opponents for the June match: Bob Baker of Pittsburgh; Tommy Jackson, the Far Rockaway, New York, clown; and Nino Valdes of Cuba. Of the trio at this writing, Baker is the choice of Weill, as he was prior to the signing of Moore as Rocky's latest opponent.

Had it not been for public clamor, Baker would have been seen in the place of Archie at Yankee Stadium, with probably a third of the gate in attendance, since he lacks color, has a weak chin, and has a brittle hand. Fortunate for Marciano and Jim Norris, the J.B.C. promoter, that Moore, not Baker, was the choice.

Archie sold himself to the public. It was he who made the fight the huge success it was financially. He kept up the public interest with his training camp chatters.

Great things were predicted when Marciano and Moore shook hands and agreed to the heavyweight title fight. Moore presented a challenge like no other for Marciano, having engaged in 144 bouts and stopped 82 opponents, while being halted only four times himself.

THE RING RATINGS, November 1955

Carmen Basilio

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Rocky Marciano, Brockton, MA
1. **Archie Moore,** San Diego, CA
2. **Bob Baker,** Pittsburgh, PA
3. **Tommy Jackson,** Far Rockaway, NY
4. **Nino Valdes,** Cuba
5. **Earl Walls,** Canada
6. **Ezzard Charles,** Cincinnati, OH
7. **Don Cockell,** England
8. **Heinz Neuhaus,** Germany
9. **Franco Cavicchi,** Italy
10. **Rex Layne,** Lewiston, UT

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Archie Moore, San Diego, CA
1. **Floyd Patterson,** Brooklyn, NY
2. **Harold Johnson,** Philadelphia, PA
3. **Yolande Pompey,** Trinidad
4. **Willie Pastrano,** New Orleans, LA
5. **Bob Satterfield,** Chicago, IL
6. **Gerhard Hecht,** Germany
7. **Joey Maxim,** Cleveland, OH
8. **Randy Turpin,** England
9. **Willi Hoepner,** Germany
10. **Dave Whitlock,** San Francisco, CA

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carl "Bobo" Olson, Honolulu, HI
1. **Charley Humez,** France
2. **Ray Robinson,** New York, NY
3. **Rocky Castellani,** Cleveland, OH
4. **Gene Fullmer,** West Jordan, UT
5. **Holly Mims,** Washington, D.C.
6. **Eduardo Lausse,** Argentina
7. **Milo Savage,** Salt Lake City, UT
8. **Joey Giambra,** Ft. Hood, TX
9. **Bobby Dykes,** Miami, FL
10. **Gil Turner,** Philadelphia, PA

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carmen Basilio, Syracuse, NY
1. **Tony DeMarco,** Boston, MA
2. **Ramon Fuentes,** Los Angeles, CA
3. **Johnny Saxton,** Brooklyn, NY
4. **Vince Martinez,** Paterson, NJ
5. **Virgil Akins,** St. Louis, MO
6. **Del Flanagan,** St. Paul, MN
7. **Maurice Harper,** Oakland, CA
8. **Hector Constance,** Trinidad
9. **Chico Vejar,** Stamford, CT
10. **Oscar Pita,** Argentina

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wallace "Bud" Smith, Cincinnati, OH
1. **James Carter,** New York, NY
2. **Duilio Loi,** Italy
3. **Ralph Dupas,** New Orleans, LA
4. **Frankie Ryff,** New York, NY
5. **Kenny Lane,** Moskegon, MI
6. **Cisco Andrade,** Compton, CA
7. **Orlando Zulueta,** Cuba
8. **Joe Lopes,** Sacramento, CA
9. **Johnny Gonsalves,** Oakland, CA
10. **Arthur Persley,** Red Crosse, LA

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sandy Saddler, New York, NY
1. **Ciro Morasen,** Cuba
2. **Ray Famechon,** France
3. **Teddy Davis,** Hartford, CT
4. **Carmelo Costa,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **Billy Kelly,** Ireland
6. **Hogan Bassey,** Nigeria
7. **Flash Elorde,** Philippines
8. **Fred Galiana,** Spain
9. **Lauro Salas,** Los Angeles, CA
10. **Lulu Perez,** Brooklyn, NY

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Robert Cohen, France
1. **Willie Toweel,** South Africa
2. **Mario D'Agata,** Italy
3. **Billy Peacock,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Hilaire Pratesi,** France
5. **Andre Valignat,** France
6. **Raton Macias,** Mexico
7. **Chamrern Songkitrat,** Thailand
8. **Jose Lopez,** Mexico
9. **Emil Chemama,** France
10. **Nai Sanong,** Thailand

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Pascual Perez, Argentina
1. **Leo Espinosa,** Philippines
2. **Dai Dower,** Wales
3. **Danny Kid,** Philippines
4. **Jake Tuli,** South Africa
5. **Nazzareno Gianelli,** Italy
6. **Oscar Suarez,** Cuba
7. **Tanny Campo,** Philippines
8. **Hitoshi Misako,** Japan
9. **Memo Diez,** Mexico
10. **Young Martin,** Spain

Without belittling Marciano as an attraction, it must be frankly stated that without Moore, the last heavyweight title bout wouldn't have drawn half the amount it did with Baker, Jackson, or Valdes. Even Jim Norris and Weill admit that. Yet one of these three—if left to Weill, Baker will be the man–will be Rocky's next challenger.

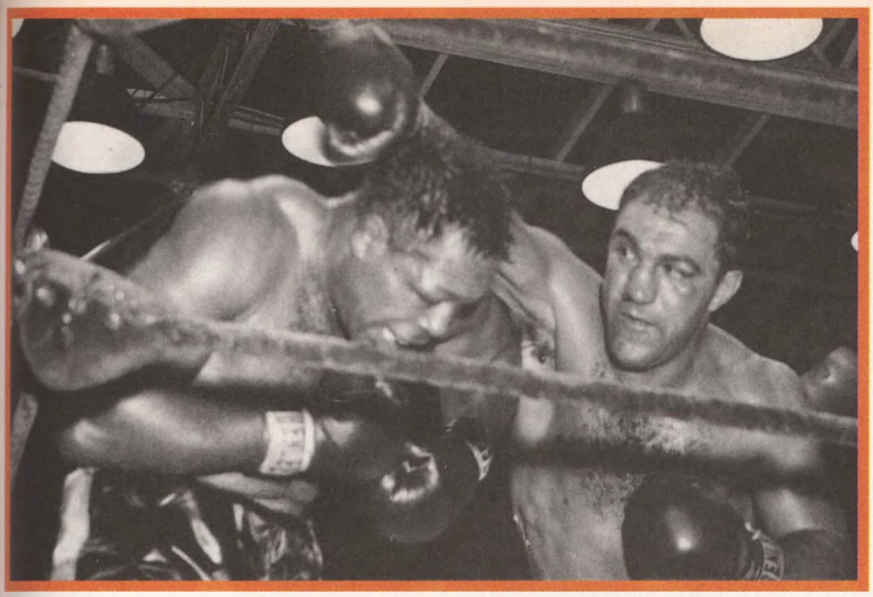
So much for Marciano's future.

What of his victim? Archie still holds the world light heavyweight crown and declared that if he can get another shot at Marciano, he'd like it, but if he can't, he's prepared to defend his title against the best challenger.

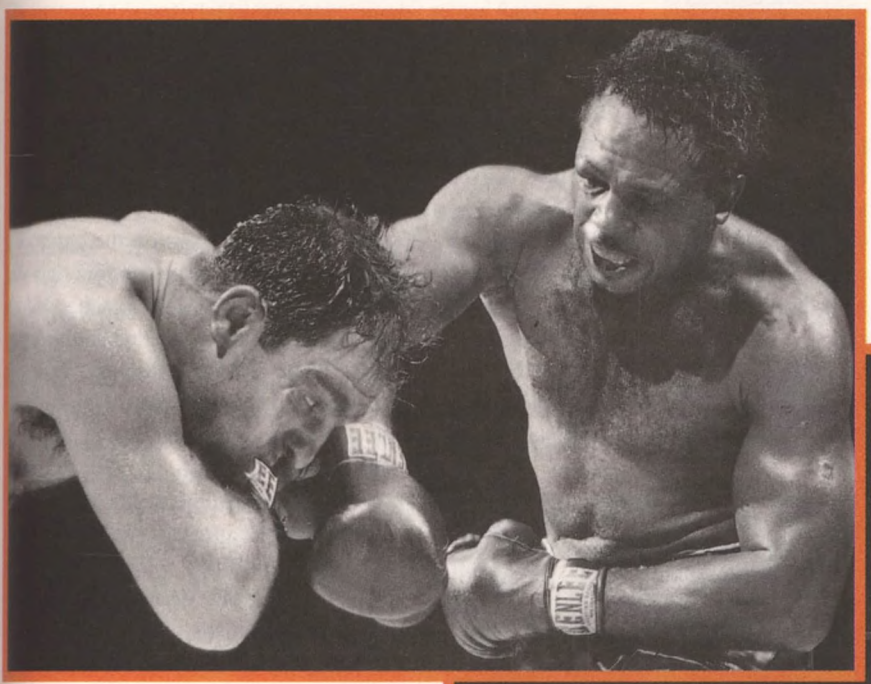
"Marciano knows where he can make some more big dough. He realizes as I do what fight will bring him another record crowd. I made one big mistake in following him after I had dropped him in the second round and had him groggy. I should have picked him off with straight punches and I think I would have gotten him. Perhaps if I get another opportunity, I'll fight him a little differently. I hope I can get that rematch, but if not, I still have others I can tackle."

As for the thrilling battle that ended in Rocky's successful title defense, the champion will always remember that as his toughest and most thrilling. Few heavyweight frays have been marked by such dramatic fighting as this one.

Though all officials and every one of the



Marciano kept coming forward, yet many of The Brockton Blockbuster's punches went wild or fell short of their mark. The shots that did land, however, would eventually wear down Moore.



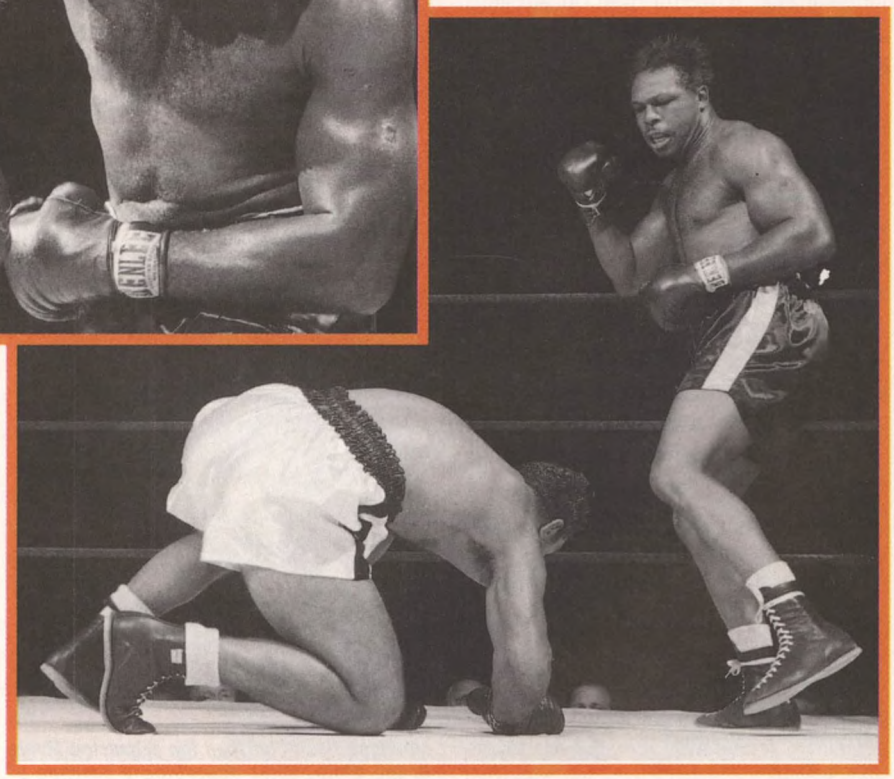
several hundred scribes at ringside had Rocky leading at the time of the finish, the scorecards didn't give a fair estimate of punishment meted out to the victor. Judge Harold Barnes, the best in New York, had Rocky ahead by a 5-3 count when the ninth started. Referee Harry Kessler scored five for Rocky, two for Moore, and one even, and Artie Aidala, the other judge, gave Moore only one round. My tally was 6-2. I gave Moore the second and fifth rounds.

But even in the rounds that Moore lost, he gave plenty and took plenty. There was no let up in his fighting. He stood his ground even when pressed against the ropes, which happened five times, and through the barrage tossed at him, he stopped more than half the punches with his arms or blocked them. But those that did come through struck with such effectiveness that they wore him down and paved the way for his ultimate downfall.

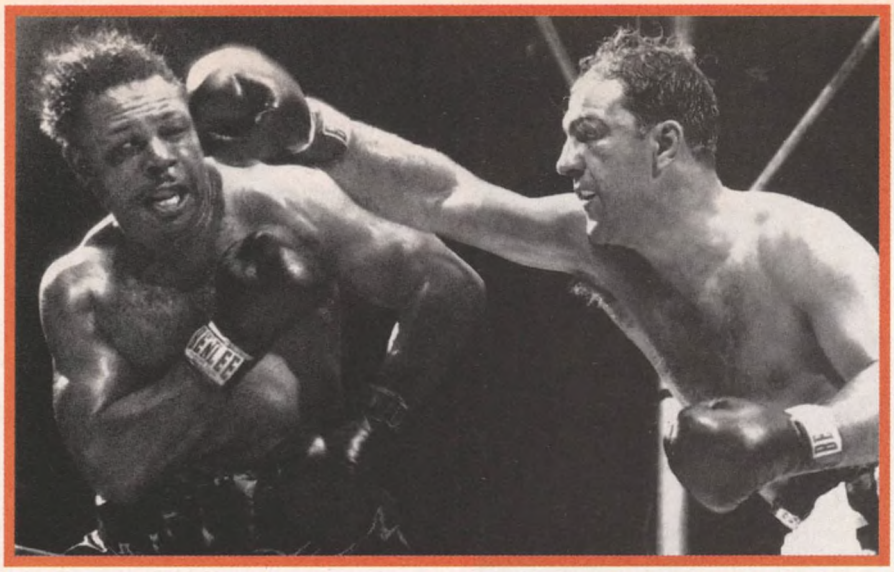
Many of the Rocky's tosses went wild or were a little short of the mark. But his stamina, determination, and the tremendous power behind the punches that did connect, were sufficient to enable him to come through with the victory that was so heavily predicted by the 4-1 ringside odds.

For a few moments in the second round, after Marciano had gained a clean margin advantage in the opening session, it seemed that the vast crowd would be treated to the biggest heavyweight championship upset since Jimmy Braddock dethroned Max Baer.

Fighting cleverly, Moore, stepping back as Rocky tried to nail him with a left hook, caught the champion with a short right to the jaw and dropped him amidst a howl from the thousands who packed Yankee Stadium. Though The Rock got up at the count of two, he was dazed, and that's where Archie, with his knowledge of boxing gained through almost two decades



"The Old Mongoose" nailed Marciano with a short right to the jaw in the second, dropping Rocky for only the second time on his career, amidst a howl from the crowd at Yankee Stadium. Rocky was up by the count of three, proving he could take a shot, which some had doubted.



The second-round knockdown seemed to awaken Marciano, who began crowding and landing powershots against Moore. By the sixth, Rocky was in full control of the fight, twice flooring Moore with rights to the jaw, once for a four-count and again for eight.

against the world's best, made his mistake.

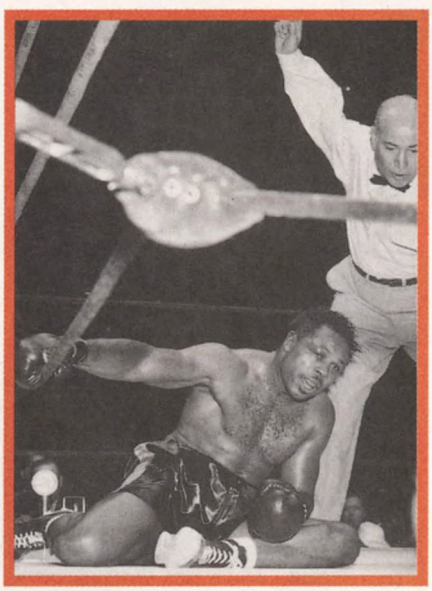
Instead of stepping out of range and depending on his long reach to take full advantage of the situation he had created, Moore went in for the kill. He went after Rocky and brought claret from The Rock's nose. But the champion, in close, was able to check the attack that might have proved fatal to him. Then, suddenly coming to life, he bounced a powerful right off Archie's chin and followed with an attack that ended only when the bell sounded.

As he walked to his corner, he seemed a bit unsteady and blinked, but when the gong sounded for the third round, he was the old Rocky again, tossing blows from all angles, many missing, some landing, but ever on the go. From then on, Moore was subjected in every round to the withering fire of his adversary, but no matter how hard he was hit, he fought as a challenger should—until his strength gave way, his arms grew weak, and the inevitable took place.

There's no fighter in the world today who could have given a better account of himself against such battering from a man of steel and iron as did Moore.

It was a fierce, grueling fistic fray, a duel of leather such as was envisioned from the day the bout was arranged. Archie didn't let down his friends, his staunch supporters who fought his battle when he demanded recognition, nor did Marciano, who fought his usual crude but effective battering-ram fight. It was only the second time in Marciano's career that he was felled, the other being when he was dropped in Philadelphia by Jersey Joe Walcott.

Marciano proved that he can take a punch, something many have doubted. Time and again the perfectly timed deliveries of Archie landed with effectiveness, several shook him up, yet the Brockton clouter came right back at his tormentor with a wild, furious attack of his own. He either cornered Moore in neutral territory or held him on one side of the ring against the ropes where he found the clever, experienced Archie blocking or taking the punches on his arms. Those terrific attacks made Moore's arms so heavy, he could hardly move them in the final round.



Marciano finally finished the exhausted Moore in the ninth. After absorbing a barrage of punches, two left hooks crumbled Moore in the corner, where referee Harry Kessler counted him out at the 1:19 mark.

But it was not until the sixth round that Marciano took full charge. In that session, he handed Archie a shellacking with rights to the jaw, twice putting the challenger on the canvas, once for four and again for an eight-count.

He gave Moore an unmerciful beating, pounding away with flaying fists, though many blows missed. The bell brought sweet music to Moore's ears.

As he staggered to his corner, the ringside doctor rushed into the ring, examined Archie, then advised referee Kessler on the challenger's condition, but permitted the bout to continue.

In the seventh round, Moore again hit the canvas, but the referee ruled this a slip, though Marciano had tapped Moore on the chin to put him off-balance.

From then on, the champion continued his ruthless attack. It was evident to all that the bout would not go much longer, as Archie showed signs of distress combined with arm fatigue.

Marciano had Moore on the verge of a kayo in the eighth, when a looping right that landed somewhat as did the punches of Luis Firpo—a sort of chop—spilled Archie to the canvas in a squatting position. It didn't seem possible he could get up on time. He was still down when the bell came to his rescue at the count of six. Had it not, he would undoubtedly have been counted out.

The doctor again raced into the ring for a quick examination of Archie and, after advising Kessler, let Moore come out for a worse fate in the ninth—his last.

The end came as Marciano, bleeding from the nose and a cut over the left eye sustained in the second round, rushed out for the kill.

Moore, weary but refusing to yield, stood his ground for a few seconds, then was pounded into his own corner, and there, with a hellish crossfire of lefts and rights that came so rapidly one couldn't keep up with the count, was felled again. Two pulverizing left hooks, one following quickly on the heels of the other, turned the trick.

Moore sank to the canvas. His legs were too heavy to enable him to move them. He sat with legs crossed, listening to the count of the referee through glazed eyes, his right half-closed and claret coming from his nose.

The fight over, Moore walked over to put his arm around Rocky's shoulder, as the champ's hand was held up in victory. Both posed happily together for movie and newspaper photographers.

When the count reached eight, he made an attempt to rise, but sank back exhausted. He couldn't make it. The bombardment of The Brockton Blockbuster had taken its toll.

The fight was over. Moore was helped to his seat and he quickly recovered. He walked out to greet Rocky as the champ's hand was held up in victory, then to show he was not hurt badly, he shadow boxed a little in the ring, again walked over to Rocky, and with arm about the champ's shoulders, posed for the movies and newspaper photographers.

This was a typical Marciano fight—a bout in which he displayed as much crudeness as in each of his previous engagements, but did land more punches with greater effectiveness.

As in the fight with Walcott in Philadelphia, he bled from his nose, was down once, was jarred many times, missed swinging blows, was cut up in several places, and took plenty of punishment.

But he retained his throne, still undefeated since he started his professional career, a clouter extraordinaire who takes his place in ring history with the great hitters of all-time—James J. Jeffries, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jack Dempsey, and Joe Louis. He came through triumphantly on his punching power and stamina despite his crudeness.

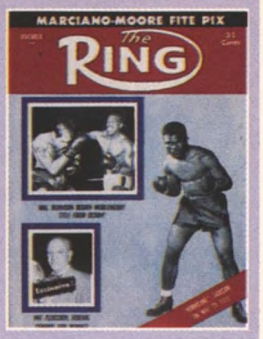
At 188¼ pounds he seemed to be fit as a fiddle, a weight that suited him. His opponent scaled a quarter of a pound less, and the weight made him somewhat sluggish. He would have had more speed with a few pounds less.

The affair continued the jinx that hangs over the head of all light heavyweight champions who have attempted to wrest the crown from the heavyweight kings. No one thus far has succeeded to turn the trick.

Two all-time greats among the heavyweights, Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey, lost their title in their sixth title defense, but Marciano overcame that hurdle by successfully coming through against Moore. ■

THE RING, November 1955

***The Cover*:** Sugar Ray Robinson's planned challenge of middleweight champ Bobo Olson, rising heavyweight contender Tommy "Hurricane" Jackson, and RING founder Nat Fleischer's opposition to a federal commission to regulate boxing all made their way onto the front of the issue.



***Can Ray Do It Again?*:** Some doubted whether or not Sugar Ray Robinson could beat middleweight champion Carl "Bobo" Olson. Sugar Ray, coming back from a temporary retirement, was still a viable threat to Olson, but he was 35 and his legs, once his greatest asset, had slowed in recent years.

***New To The Hall*:** Boxing greats Mickey Walker, Gene Tunney, Harry Greb, and Benny Leonard (pictured fighting Rocky Kansas) were all inducted into to the Boxing Hall of Fame, which at the time was headquartered at THE RING's New York offices.

***Trialhorses*:** Aged fighters, like former heavyweight champ Ezzard Charles, may have gone to the well once too often, but THE RING thought Charles was important to boxing. Despite tarnished skills that made him a trialhorse, Charles was still in demand by fans and promoters to test young hopefuls.

***Fighter Of The Month*:** Rocky Marciano came back from a second-round knockdown to defeat light heavyweight champ Archie Moore in his sixth (and, as it would turn out, final) defense of the heavyweight title. Marciano battered Moore in the sixth, seventh, and eighth, finally ending Moore's bid with a ninth-round kayo.

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

RESPECT FOR LENNOX

Lennox Lewis' thorough domination of Mike Tyson made me a very happy fight fan. I've had a lot of respect for Lewis ever since he began ruling the division. I respect the way he carries himself, but more importantly, I respect his skills in the ring. Many people don't understand, or refuse to accept, that he is truly a great fighter and seems to be in top form at the age of 36. His two knockout losses were due to lack of focus, but when he prepares mentally and physically for a fight, he looks invincible.

Mike Tyson had no place in that ring. He is without question a legendary heavyweight, but he didn't earn a title shot and he definitely didn't deserve to be ranked second in THE RING's ratings. Lennox did a great service to the sport of boxing by showing the masses that it takes more than a big name and a big punch to challenge the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. If the champ doesn't fight Chris Byrd or Wladimir Klitschko, he should just retire at the top. He has nothing left to prove.

BRIAN WAGNER
Green Brook, NJ

MEDICATED MIKE

What kind of drugs did they have Mike Tyson on when he fought Lennox Lewis? When Tyson walked to the ring, he looked like he was confused and scared. Did they medicate him so he wouldn't do something to get disqualified or do something crazy before the fight to cause a cancellation?

BOB MUELLER
Pasadena, TX

[Editor's note: The topic is discussed in this issue's "Ringside" editorial (page 6).]

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Lennox Lewis' domination of Mike Tyson made reader Brian Wagner a very happy fight fan. Many refuse to accept that Lewis is truly a great fighter, contends Wagner.

GEEZ, RUIZ!

Having just watched the John Ruiz-Kirk Johnson fight, I have to say what an utter disgrace this was. David Tua was criticized for a non-effort against Lennox Lewis, but these two men give that term new meaning.

To be fair to Johnson, he was making somewhat of an effort before his disqualification, but this cannot make up for the crude way both men fought the majority of the contest. Against a man as unskilled as Ruiz, Johnson should have taken the fight to him. But he didn't.

As for Ruiz, he may be the worst "champion" in recent memory. Never have I seen a

The John Ruiz-Kirk Johnson fight, which ended with Johnson getting disqualified in the 10th, was a disgrace to boxing, says reader Gareth Rodgers. Ruiz not only proved he doesn't belong in the same ring with Lennox Lewis, Ruiz may be the worst heavyweight titleholder in recent memory, in Rodgers' opinion.

man attempt to get his opponent disqualified in so blatant a fashion. I don't know about the rest of your readers, but I have never seen a man fall flat on his face following a low blow. The first two times, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt, but the third time, he did it on a punch that appeared to bounce off his thigh. And for those who think he was legitimately as badly hurt as he claimed, please note that the fourth low blow, which was obvious and caused the DQ, did not prompt any reaction from Ruiz. And this man has the gall to call out Lennox Lewis. The man doesn't belong in the same building as Lennox, never mind the same ring.

GARETH RODGERS
Whickham, England

GIVE TSZYU HIS DUE

For the last couple issues of THE RING, you guys have ranked Kostya Tszyu 10th in your pound-for-pound ratings. Why? What's he gotta do? He is in one of the toughest divisions in boxing, junior welterweight. He's taken on anyone willing to fight him and challenge him for the belt. Come on! He deserves better than 10th.

SAM GREGORY
Harrisburg, PA

[Editor's note: Tszyu was 10th as of the September 2002 issue, but he moved up to eighth in the October issue, and is now rated fifth.]

THANK YOU, TITO

Felix Trinidad, thank you for a great, great career. Although your decision to retire at this stage of your career came as a shock, I am very happy for you and grateful for your wonderful career in this great sport. To me, there has not been a boxer like you. Fighting every opponent around and fighting to the very end, giving everything you have to offer—that's what boxing should be about.

Felix, you've revived this wonderful sport. Although I am sad to see you retire, I am happy that you got out of this tough game in perfect health, with millions of dollars, a huge legion of fans, and a great legacy. Too many fighters carry on too long, and I'm glad to see my favorite fighter can get out on top at the right time. Good luck in the future on what you decide to do. We'll miss you, Tito. Thanks for the memories!

CHRIS SMITH
kingtitotrinidad@aol.com

CUPS RUNNETH OVER

I think there needs to be a basic standard and set of regulations for all fighters concerning the protective cup. In the last few years, this protective devise could be called body armor. It's taking the Rocky Marcianos, Joe Fraziers, and Mike Tysons out of the fight game. You see it constantly when the referee gives prefight instructions, when he says, "The cup is high, so we'll call this a good punch." The heck with that. The protective cup is covering the short ribs, which shorter fighters used to feast on. Heavyweight Michael Grant's protective cup used to hit his chest when he sat down. In photos in the October issue of THE RING, Johnny Tapia's cup stretched about six inches above where his beltline should be. The navel should be a measuring point for the cup, and it should be inspected and adjusted to meet the standard in the dressing room. There should be a uniform rule, instead of fighters getting away with padding their waists.

RICK CONDI
Dayton, OH

ZEAL FOR ZALE

I liked the tribute to Roberto Duran in the September 2002 issue. Next, I would love to see a tribute to Tony Zale, "The Man Of Steel." Zale kept the title for six years, yet it seems more people know about Rocky Graziano, who held the middleweight crown for one year. A Zale tribute would be a historic revival for today's generation.

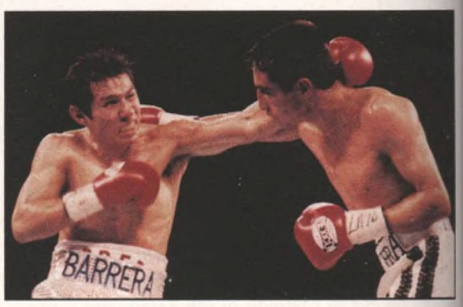
AGGIE SZUMOWSKA
Mt. Prospect, IL ■

Tony Zale deserves a tribute in THE RING, says reader Aggie Szumowska. "The Man Of Steel" held the middleweight title for six years, yet his less-accomplished rival, Rocky Graziano, may be better known to today's fans.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

REARRANGING RIVALRIES



Barrera, Morales, Tapia, and Ayala will swap foes before swapping blows

Many years from now, there's no doubt that the name **Marco Antonio Barrera** will be linked with that of **Erik Morales**, and that **Paulie Ayala's** name will be immediately associated with **Johnny Tapia's**. When you engage in a stirring Fight of the Year, as Ayala and Tapia did in 1999 and Barrera and Morales did in 2000, then you follow it up with a memorable, controversial rematch, as both pairs of rivals have, it's inevitable that your names will go together like **Ali** and **Frazier**, **Zale** and **Graziano**, or **Tupac** and **Biggie**.

But while much of the public clamors for a third Barrera-Morales fight to determine who really deserves to wear the world featherweight crown, the Mexican arch-rivals are going their separate ways for the moment. They'll both return to the ring in Las Vegas in November, and it will be old foes Tapia and Ayala, also having gone their separate ways, staring at them from across the squared circle.

On November 2, Barrera defends the 126-pound world title against Tapia, holder of the IBF trinket, on HBO. With Tapia coming off a career-worst performance in winning a highly disputed decision over **Manuel Medina** in April, Barrera deservedly starts as the favorite. But Barrera's new laid-back, counterpunching (and some might say counterproductive) approach leaves him open to be outworked by a fighter with intelligence, experience, a sturdy chin, and a high punch output. Even as Tapia's hand and foot speed begin to diminish at age 35, he still boasts all of the qualities listed above and could present a serious test for THE RING featherweight champ.

Two weeks later, on November 16, HBO Pay-Per-View presents Morales vs. Ayala, a featherweight 12-rounder featuring two of the most consistently entertaining performers in the sport. Ayala, the recognized champion at 122 pounds, will move up four pounds and hold on to his junior feather title pending the outcome—an outcome that is very much in doubt. Morales is naturally bigger and boasts better punching power, but Ayala appears slightly quicker and typically has superior stamina. Neither fighter is a stranger to the so-called Vegas decision, but with both men backed by **Bob Arum**, it's difficult to say either one will have an edge should it go the full 12. And the smart money says it will, since Ayala's last seven scheduled 12-rounders have gone the distance, and Morales' last five have as well. (Look for a full-blown preview of the fight in next month's RING EXTRA.)

As if that's not enough to make this a November to remember for featherweight fans, the Morales-Ayala undercard will feature a feather fight between two ex-titlists with controversial losses to the evening's headliners on their records. **Bones Adams**, who many feel deserved to win his first fight with Ayala, will move up from 122 to take on **Guty Espadas**, who arguably outfought Morales in February '01.

The only thing more fun than rekindling an old rivalry is sparking up a new one. Wherever this November leads us—to Barrera-Morales III, to Ayala-Tapia III, or to another mix-and-match—it should be a heckuva trip getting there.

LISTEN UP

Another pair of recent rivals plotting their returns are **Lennox Lewis** and **Mike Tyson**. HBO has set aside December 7 for Lewis' next title defense (assuming he doesn't retire first), with unworthy WBC mandatory **Vitali Klitschko** looking more likely to get the shot than deserving IBF number-one **Chris Byrd**. Meanwhile, Tyson's next comeback looks like it may start on October 26 or November 9. Adviser **Shelly Finkel** is looking into the possibility of Tyson working with his old pal **Don King** to get a shot at WBA beltholder **John Ruiz**, but the obstacles are many. The more likely opponent is **Clifford Etienne**, who looks just right for this faded version of Tyson to rebuild some confidence and restore some luster, while still taking on a respectable, top-20 heavyweight … Showtime has two appealing cards scheduled for mid-October. On the 12th, welterweight **Antonio Margarito** faces **Danny Perez**, while flyweight titlist **Eric Morel** defends against mandatory challenger **Denkaosaen Kaowitch**. And on the 19th, surging junior welter **Diobelys Hurtado** faces a quality test in the form of once-beaten **Vivian Harris**. ■

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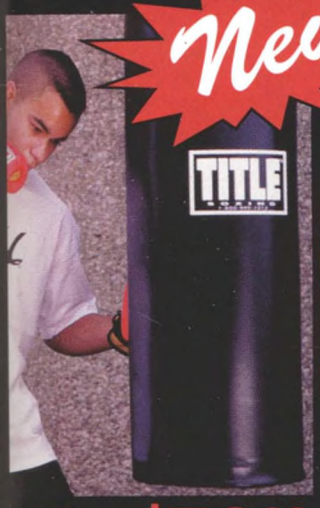

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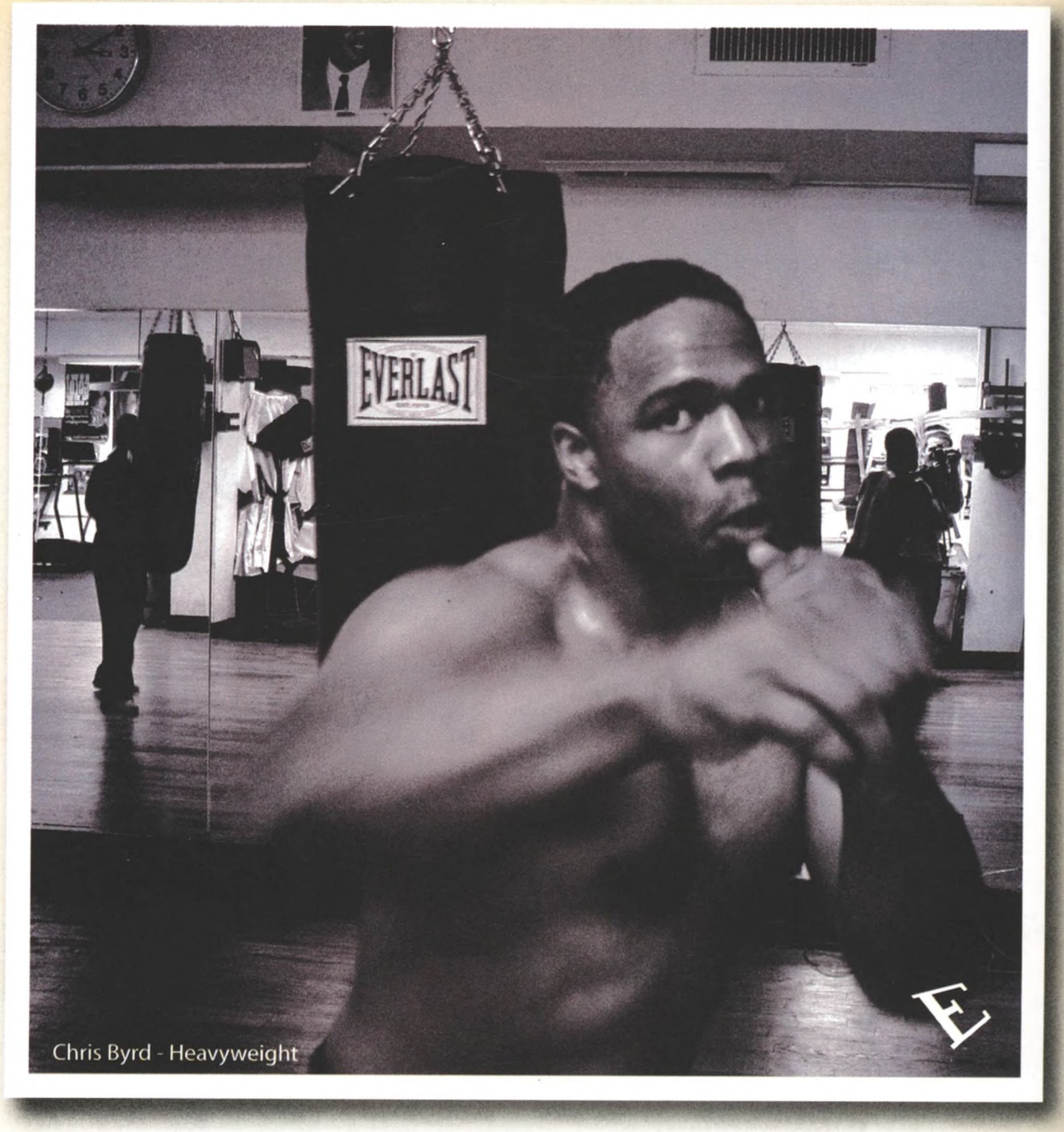

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